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## *Star Trek: "Where No Man Has Gone Before"*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 9, 2009

[Comments \(44\)](#)



Growing up, I didn't have a lot in common with my dad. He fixed copiers and was good with his hands; I played video games and had a hard time remembering my left from my right. Plus, he was into sports, and I didn't really give a crap. I've tried to watch football, but it always seems like the waste of a good nap (although given how often I've seen Dad fall asleep in front of a game, I guess he agrees with me). Fishing was okay. Boring, but okay, and apart from getting the worm on the hook, the mechanical demands were so limited that even I had a hard time screwing them up. But you can only fish so often in a year, which means there were all these months we'd be related to each other, but still have nothing to do.

Fortunately, we both liked movies and we both liked to read, and even better, we liked some of the same stuff. Dad got me interested in Isaac Asimov, Frank Herbert, Terry Brooks, David Eddings, Roger Zelazney, and Michael Crichton, among others, and while some of them haven't aged so well in my mind (as a writer, Tom Clancy makes an excellent munitions hobbyist), it put me on the right kind of path; without Dad, I wouldn't have started reading Stephen King, and who the hell knows where I would've wound up. (I suspect docks and/or sailors may have been involved.)

As for the movies, I've seen more of the **Highlander** franchise than any sensible person should, but the films we watched the most came from *Star Trek*. Dad took me to see parts four and five in theaters, we had a tape of **Wrath of Khan** from off broadcast TV that I must've played at least fifty times, and then there was the series that started it all. When I was a kid, *The Next Generation* was just coming into prominence, but the original show was still in syndication. So every Saturday night, 'round five-ish, we'd move the kitchen table so we could all see the television, and over franks and beans (bleargh), the whole family would watch Captain Kirk, Spock, Sulu, and the rest, warping around the galaxy, busting expensive computer equipment, and generally getting up in everybody's business.

*Trek* has come a long way from bad toupees, plywood plants, and rubber monsters. Gene Roddenberry's half-baked ideas have rattled through the collective unconscious for so long they seem nearly profound, and the cast members have all passed from characters to icons to self-parody to-something else. These days, even people who've never seen an episode know what the Enterprise is, and for the obsessives, there are the endless tie-ins and spin-offs, including four

follow-up series, a ten movie franchise, and a reboot film from J.J. Abrams that's set to hit theaters this summer. The whole thing has transcended its roots to become *cultural*, mocked by the skeptical but impossible to dismiss completely.

But what about the actual show? Running just under eighty episodes in three seasons, it would be reasonable to assume that *Trek* has long since been over-shadowed by its own success; but watching it today, it's still easy to see what got people so excited in the first place. There's a pulpy vitality to the series that no amount of franchise ennui can destroy, the thrilling, endlessly enthralling feeling of making-it-up-as-you-go. As a kid, I got hooked at first because my dad liked it, and because the aliens were cool (to an eight year-old, the Horta is freaky as hell-it looks like burnt pizza, only it can *melt your face off*). But strip away the history, ignore the baggage, and *Trek* remains a terrific piece of work. Not without its share of flaws, and we'll get to those; but this is pop culture art, and at its best, transcends the campy effects and over-acting to create a universe well worth visiting.

Once we decided to do up some old-school *Trek* for TV Club Classic, the trick became picking where to start; do you go with the original, un-aired pilot, "The Cage," with its largely different crew (including the late Majel Barrett-Roddenberry as First Officer), or do you go with the first aired episode, "The Man Trap"? I've got the season one box set, and in general, I'll be reviewing eps in the order they appear on disc; this isn't really a continuity heavy-show, and I'd rather not get bogged down in minutiae right out of the gate. That said, I'm opening with "Where No Man Has Gone Before," the second pilot, and the debut of Shatner as Captain James T. Kirk. It's actually third in the release schedule, but given how different it is from the "real" show, it makes sense to cheat a little, just this once. (As for "The Cage," we'll get there in a few weeks with "The Menagerie," a rare two-parter that essentially recycles footage from the original pilot through a process of high-tech flashbackin'.)

"No Man" introduces one of *Trek*'s most oft-recurring villains: a being gifted with incredible powers who lacks the judgment or maturity to know how to use those powers wisely. When the Enterprise encounters a strange force field at the edge of the galaxy, helmsmen Gary Mitchell (Gary Lockwood) and psychiatrist Elizabeth Dehner (Sally Kellerman) get walloped by a blast of cosmic energy that gives Gary some freaky (and really painful looking) silver contacts, but leaves Elizabeth initially unaffected. Before encountering the field, the Enterprise recovered a black-box type recording from the missing SS Valiant, and as Gary develops increasingly unnerving powers (including speed reading, psychic abilities, and Trumpy's knack for doing magic things), that recording provides the only clues as to what comes next. The Valiant, it seems, had its run in with the force field, and as far as Spock can tell, when one of its own crew started making rapid jumps up the evolutionary ladder, the captain of the ship ordered a self-destruct.

So the question isn't what's happening to Gary as much as it is, what does that mean for the rest of us? Spock, always the reasonable one, advocates marooning the freak, or else killing him while they still can, but Kirk goes all Hamlet and starts in with the hand-wringing. Given his friendship with Gary, will he make the right choice-if there's even a right choice to be made—and can he do it before it's too late?

Like a lot of pilots, "No Man" is most interesting for what it lacks. Much of the cast is already in place, including James Doohan at Engineering and George Takei, but instead of DeForest Kelley as Dr. McCoy, we've got the genially dull Dr. Piper (Paul Fix) in Sick Bay, and there's no Uhura in sight. The production design isn't quite finished yet, either; the show's look was always more about impressions (and thrift) than functionality, but that bridge looks awfully empty, and the brown sweater-shirts that Kirk, Spock, and a good portion of the crew wear are depressingly flat and washed out.

As for Kirk and Spock, the relationship is nearly there; the friendship between the two would give the franchise some of its best moments, but while Kirk is much the same as he'd ever be (I've gotten so used to Shatner's over-acting in the role that I can't really imagine it otherwise; even the snicker-worthy moments near the end of the ep when he's being "tortured" by Gary don't seem *that* ridiculous), Nimoy's Spock is aggressive and kind of pissy, a far cry from the even-tempered sage he would eventually become. He's criticized more than once for his "lack of emotion," but that criticism seems thoroughly misplaced; apart from his ears and his occasional mentions of logic, he's not any different from the rest of the crew. (From my notes: "SMUG IS AN EMOTION.")

As for the episode itself, it drags in places, and spends more time with Gary and Elizabeth than it really needs to—inevitably Elizabeth starts developing her own mental hoodoo, and there's only so much "Come with me and we can rule the galaxy as dude and dude's sort of girlfriend" dialogue you can take before it gets dull. The sexual politics are hilariously (and embarrassingly) dated, but we'll save that for another installment; suffice to say, Elizabeth's "Women professionals do tend to overcompensate" is not meant ironically. To a modern audience, raised to expect a certain

degree of realism in its genre offerings, "No Man"'s approach is exceedingly simplistic; the force field at the edge of the galaxy is about as blatant as sci-fi MacGuffins get, and there's no effort made to explain why Gary gets so powerful so fast, apart from his high ratings as an "esper" (the ep presumes the existence of ESP, a development I can't remember ever coming up again). Plus, the speed with which the crew jumps from, "Hey, Gary's okay!" to "Hey, we need to kill Gary!" is remarkably fast. No one ever discusses trying to reason with him, or cure him; odds are neither would've worked, but just skipping to the end is a bit like cheating.

But that might be missing the point. In addition to giving Gary and Elizabeth The Touch, the magic force field also wrecks the Enterprise's engines, making the nearest star-bases "years in the distance" instead of just weeks. The engine problems are ultimately fixed without a whole lot of hand-wringing, but that one line, and all the weight behind it, throws the rest of the episode into sharper focus. One of the things that makes the original *Trek* so exciting to watch, for all its clumsiness, is its sense of dangerous exploration; the whole thing is run without a safety net, and every decision becomes life and death, filled with consequences impossible to foresee, let alone plan for. The spin-offs would have better effects and better attention to detail, but none of them ever captured the original's knife's edge intensity. It's a show of over-sized emotions, and often all the crazy hormone-driven monologues skirt close to camp; but maybe those passions aren't that unreasonable, given the circumstances.

By the end of "No Man," Kirk is forced to decide between loyalty to his friend and loyalty to his ship, and to no one's surprise, he chooses the latter; for all the jokes about his libido, Kirk's only true love is the Enterprise, and along with his friendship with Spock, it's the character's defining trait. So we get some decent cat-and-mouse stuff, with Kirk attempting to strand Gary on a human-free mining planet before realizing that, given Gary's exponential development, that might not be a wise choice. Gary kills a crew-member and forces Kirk to follow him and Elizabeth out into the planet's soon-to-be-very-familiar rocky landscape. While G and E get their god thing on, a hopelessly outmatched Kirk stalks them with his laser rifle; all appears lost, but in the final scenes, Kirk manages to remind Elizabeth of her obligations to humanity, and the whole thing ends with a charmingly goofy fistfight between man and Superman.

In some ways, this is an awkward episode, bridging the gap between concept and what the series would ultimately become, but it's not without its charms. And for whatever it may lack, "No Man" does have, at its heart, what would be *Trek's* biggest concern: the lure of unknown, and how we deal with what we find there. It also has pointy ears, plastic plant-life, and clumsy brawls on less-than-sturdy sets. As any dad could tell you, those are pretty important too.

**Grade: B+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

—In the upcoming months, I'll be covering the rest of the first season, and hopefully beyond; I'd also like to throw in a few of the movies—at the very least, a "Space Seed"/**Wrath of Khan** double feature seems essential. See you next week!

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (44)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 12:18pm

Say this for Trek

For all its over-the-top elements, it upheld Rod Serling's tradition of social commentary on television wrapped in science fiction. And "The City on the Edge of Forever" will always be one of the greatest stories ever broadcast over the American airwaves.

Also, Zack, I salute you for the MST3K Pod People reference. Hideous Control now . . .

[Reply](#)

- [AJR](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 12:39pm

A TV Club Classic on The Twilight Zone would be pretty cool, too. Some of Serling's social commentary was downright shocking and prescient as hell.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 12:51pm

"The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street" is a tight, well-told story. We had the script assigned to us in middle school.

[Reply](#)

- [Karatloz](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 1:09pm

Hey us too Denby. I remember we tried to do a TV production of it and I got/had to be the narrator. It was before I knew what Rod Serling sounds like so I just did this staid authoritative boring announcer voice. Jesus that sucked.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 1:25pm

Twilight Zone was an amazing show and well worth an AV TV Club series.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 1:32pm

I think some of the over-the-top elements are part of the natural aging of 60s television not exclusive to Trek, but other parts are almost mythical exaggerations...like Shatner's overacting. Except for a few moments, his acting is much more subtle and less Shatner-esque in the Original Series than you would expect.

I think many expect Shatner did Kirk in TOS like he did post-Star Trek III...that is, a complete caricature and almost parody of the original Kirk. Between ST III and IV you see a huge shift in the portrayal of Kirk, and many of the other characters, as they move more into the realm of poking fun at themselves. This latter portrayal seems to be the inspiration for J.J. Abrams' portrayal of Kirk from what I've seen in the trailers.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 1:55pm

Oh, I don't know. The parody elements get ramped up in the later films, but Kirk's isolation and regrets are visible in Star Trek VI and especially Generations.

On the Twilight Zone: I was thinking of stories about "Time Enough At Last" and was trying to remember the last time I saw a network show with such a nasty, heartbreaking twist at the end. One that just rips up its somewhat decent protagonist. There may have been one in the last 10 years; I can't recall it or didn't see it.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 1:58pm

"I was thinking of stories like . . ." not "I was thinking of stories about . . ." Sorry.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/09/09 3:09pm

TZ is great; even the preachiess eps are hypnotically entertaining. (I think it's Serling's writing-style, which bypasses purple and heads straight to aubergine.) Unless it's one of the hour-longs—not all of those are terrible, but the worst ones are really, really dull.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/13/09 6:32am

that was part of a tv movie that had 2 stories. the jack palance one was the longer of the two. i think it aired in 93, or 94 i know it cause i had it on tape for a little while before i taped over it with something stupid like Sliders or something.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 12:08pm

Special Effects Question

Are these with the original special effects, or are they redone versions?

Good call on the ESP thing - trek is notorious for making something weird an everyday occurrence one week, and then treating it as gob-smackingly unheard of the next. Time travel, parallel worlds, etc.

[Reply](#)

- [FantasticBastard](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 12:14pm

As part of my slog through the full TNG set referenced above, I've been watching each season's features. I was surprised at a part of the 3rd season's featurette, in which there's much discussion from writers and exec producers about the hand-wringing that took place when they decided to start exploring storylines of continuing narrative...apparently that had always been taboo in Roddenberry land (at least on television), so that was a big break from Star Trek "tradition."

That helps explain some of those "there one episode, never heard from again" ideas and concepts.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 12:18pm

Original special effects; I'm not a huge purist about it (unlike with, say, the director's cut of Star Wars that totally screw up the pacing of the original), but that's the set I have. I may look into the redone stuff when I get to season 2.

[Reply](#)

- [KeithPhipps](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 1:03pm

I believe that Zack is watching the last DVD release without the "improved" special effects.

How does everyone else feel about the new versions? From what I've seen, the new effects are fairly gracefully integrated... and yet I can't stand them. Am I just a grumpy purist or is anyone else bothered by this kind of tinkering?

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 1:08pm

That's why I was deeply underwhelmed by the Abrams Star Trek trailer. I can stomach a continuity reboot but the visual aesthetic just screams wrong wrong wrong wrong WRONG.

[Reply](#)

- [Karatloz](#)Penis Van Lesbian



1/09/09 1:12pm

I've never seen a full episode of Star Trek, but going back and "updating" the special effects is bullshit. They said some crap about it being necessary for HD or something, but I'm pretty sure that was bullshit as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Natural Join](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 1:16pm

Sure, I was quite concerned when I heard they were redoing the effects as well. But then I actually saw it, and they did a terrific job. They look completely in line with what was there originally.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 1:25pm

I mentioned this earlier up, but yes...the effects are tasteful and enhance the episodes. They are either space effects shots, re-done mattes, or brief CG wide shots of the planet before the team beams down (Amok Time, The Man Trap) that help make the episode feel a little less like it is filmed on a set.

And we also get Season One Klingon ships in Errand of Mercy, instead of a golden blob.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/09/09 2:26pm

Captain April,

You are correct about the new mattes, and I wish they had made them look a little more realistic. I think they were anticipating a backlash from the fans if the effects were not "in the spirit" of the original show. There might be endless bitching and so forth. Endless. See above.

I don't get the complaints, honestly. The new effects feel fairly seamless when you watch the remastered episodes. I have a suspicion that 98.7% of the complaints are coming from people who have not even watched them. Fie! The very concept is abhorrent!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Crusader for Moorish Dignity](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 1:50pm

Wrath of Madeline Kahn

Is no one going to point out that for all of Zack's ALLEGED love of all things Trek, he's misspelled "Khan" TWICE? As in "not a typo, Zack really doesn't know how to spell Khan without looking it up"?

I was going to really, really enjoy this feature, but now I'm not sure I can even look it in the eye. The shame, the shame.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Crusader for Moorish Dignity

1/09/09 2:11pm

Oh yeah? Well, well, shut up! I hate you! You're not my real father!

Also, fixed.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Crusader for Moorish Dignity

1/09/09 2:38pm

Next thing you know he'll spell "Qapla!" with a K. Goddamn it all.

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_Hungus](#)Crusader for Moorish Dignity

1/09/09 3:57pm

-Ooh ooh, make it out to Melllvar, Melllvar has three-Ls

-I think I've been to enough conventions to know how to spell "Melllvar"

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Crusader for Moorish Dignity

1/09/09 5:19pm

No, Kwirk, you cwan't escwape.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 1:47pm

This was one of my favorite Classic Trek eps

I liked the look of it, too, though I liked the look of "The Cage" even more. Spock may not have acted as alien, but he sure looked more alien.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)PeterF

1/09/09 2:35pm

Also little know Trek trivia: Bits of TNG were mined from Roddenberry's original idea for "The Cage" version of Trek.

Number One and "Engage!", for example.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)PeterF

1/09/09 3:43pm

That's not little-known. Everyone knows that.

You may now commence yelling "NERD!" at me.

[Reply](#)

- [Saul Rosenbear](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 11:48am

For us poor people

CBS's website has a lot of old school Trek episodes online for free.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Saul Rosenbear

1/09/09 5:33pm

hasn't been primetime for forty years. I'm sure most of us AV Clubbers grew up with the reruns.

WPIX Channel 11

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Saul Rosenbear

1/12/09 12:06pm

I remember it being on Thursday nights, right after Ron Ely's Tarzan. That was my big night for TV watching.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

1/11/09 5:59pm

Oooooo

Check out the shiny new website!

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)scotteb

1/11/09 6:33pm

What the hell happened to my various witty remarks?

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)scotteb

1/12/09 5:05pm

OK. They're back. Whew!

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 1:30pm

Looking Forward to This

I watched TOS as reruns over and over again as a kid, and recently one last time on DVD (then TNG, and right now DS9), so it's going to be fun to see people's takes on these episodes.

Especially when we get to Season 3 and the quality, er, drags.

[Reply](#)

- [Preparation Heche](#)barefoot jim

1/10/09 3:01pm

Yeah, season 3 is definitely weak. It gets goofy in a way that's rarely entertaining.

[Reply](#)

- [Holland Oates](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 5:27pm

Zack Handlen

Zack, very nice write-up. I'm not a huge Trek dude, with the original series comprising the bulk of Trek I've seen (and the earlier movies), but I'm gonna check what's available at the CBS web site and try to follow along.

Two things:

"I played video games and had a hard time remembering my left from my right. "

So you weren't real good at video games? Well, you're on the AV Club, so you haven't wasted your life.

Also, "SMUG IS AN EMOTION." You write your notes in all-caps? Have you and ZMF been photographed together?

Mystery solved people, mystery solved.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 1:18pm

Ah yes. One of your human emotions

I wasn't expecting this but great to see. This was near the top of my mental wish list for TV Club Classic when you guys rolled out the concept last summer. I might have to dig this up on DVD and play along (I've only seen a random smattering of TOS episodes). If anyone wants to catch up on this one now, they posted four full TOS episodes on Youtube a few months ago, Where No Man Has Gone Before among them (also Charlie X, The Enemy Within, and City on the Edge of Forever).

[Reply](#)

- [FantasticBastard](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 11:58am

Echoes to the TNG love

I got the full TNG set a month or so ago and have been slowly making my way through the 49 (!) discs.

I think some written commentary to accompany this journey I'm on is appropriate. So engage on that shit, Handlen!

[Reply](#)

- [Arbitrar Of Quality](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 8:05pm

Steady as she goes

As someone who grew up an unabashed Trekkie and still has a lot of unabashed fondness for the franchise (well, TOS/TNG/DS9, anyway) - great review, Zack, and I'm looking forward to reading more.

[Reply](#)

- [Stroszekian](#)Zack Handlen

1/12/09 9:44am

I support this

Finally a T.V. Club feature I can keep up with thanks to Netflix Watch Instantly. Way to understand my busy schedule, A.V. Club.

[Reply](#)

- [Bronco Asskicker](#)Zack Handlen

1/09/09 12:16pm

Heh heh

Yeah, I BET sailors would've been involved!!

Hoo!

Get it?

Do ya?

[Reply](#)

- [The Horta](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/09 5:24am

Sex Farm

I can't wait till you get to "The Devil in the Dark".

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Zack Handlen

8/23/16 2:58pm

Just testing the Discuss spoiler-hiderSPOILER!

[Reply](#)

- [zetes](#)Zack Handlen

1/11/09 8:53pm

Look, I'm Zardo

Just sayin' is all.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Man Trap"/"Charlie X"/"The Naked Time"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 16, 2009

[Comments \(90\)](#)



*"Is something wrong, Captain?"*

*"I was just thinking about the buffalo, Mr. Spock."*

Out of context it sounds like a bad joke. Oh that crazy Kirk and his buffalo-thinking ways! But in context, the final two lines of "The Man Trap" form a surprisingly melancholy exchange. Our first three episodes of the series proper—full cast in place (okay, Walter Koenig won't show up until the second season, but this is as close as we'll get for a while), everybody wearing the appropriate uniforms, Spock finally settling into his expected, stoic self—show *Star Trek* at its best and worst, mixing grand ideas and grander passions with antiquated sexual politics, bad hair, and in one case, a distractingly familiar storyline. The episodes are sometimes sad, in ways you might not expect; it's not like "salt vampire" is a phrase that lends itself to tragedy. (There's a bit in one of Shakespeare's unpublished plays about "yon slumbering saline succubus," but it doesn't scan, and most critics think it's something Harold Bloom stuck in there to screw with our heads.)

"Where No Man Has Gone Before" may be *Trek's* official pilot, but "Man Trap" was the first episode to air, not that you could tell from watching it. Apart from one hilariously forced conversation between Spock and Uhura, there's not much effort made to introduce us to the various crew members, or even the Enterprise herself. We get some standard exposition as to where the ship is, and why it's visiting this week's planet, and there's some obvious backstory thrown into the banter, but it's the sort of backstory that would've popped up regardless of where the ep fell in the show's run. That's not to say the story's not hard to follow, or the characters aren't immediately recognizable; it's a nicely wound script, delivering just as much information as is required each scene to let you know what's at risk, and the cast already seems completely at home in their roles. The banter between Kirk and McCoy may be on the corny side, but it still comes across as natural ribbing between old friends. One of the original *Trek's* great strengths—and it's something that none of the spin-offs were ever quite able to capture, though some came closer than others—is that feeling of immediate camaraderie. Some of the actors are better than others, and sometimes the whole boy's club atmosphere gets annoyingly thick, but hanging out with this crew is like going to a family reunion; only, here it's the reunion of a family you actually like.

TOS (the accepted nomenclature for *Trek* the original) has been credited as an influence on pretty much every genre series to hit TV since it originally aired—some sort of Velvet Underground parallel could be made, I guess—and while that influence may have been exaggerated, it's not hard to draw a line between something like "The Man Trap" and at least a dozen different *X-Files* episodes. (The connection gets even more obvious with "The Naked Time," which isn't at all what it sounds like.) The structure is familiar; our leads arrive at a new location, mysterious deaths occur and minor inconsistencies build up, a monster is discovered with a clear modus operandi, the threat strikes home, and ultimately, the creature is dispatched in a climactic confrontation. Come to think of it, that's the plot of half of the sci-fi movies ever made. And for good reason—it's logical, and, when done well, works like gangbusters.

"Trap" is done very well, I think. Back when I first bought the set, this episode was one of the few that I'd seen but didn't remember very well; watching it again then (and now), I was impressed by its efficiency and its pathos. It doesn't have the gimmicky brilliance of "City On The Edge Of Forever"—the threat, an alien that can change its form and needs high quantities of salt to survive, is clever but not exactly mind-blowing. But it's solid, and some of the additional touches are quite effective. In particular is the pathos I mentioned earlier that culminates in the Kirk/Spock exchange. When the Enterprise arrives in orbit around M-113, they find Professor Crater and his wife Nancy, exactly as they were expecting, hanging around doing what appears to be frontier science in the ruins of a long dead civilization. Unfortunately, it's not that simple: it takes the deaths of three crew members before anybody catches on, but the Prof's wife (who happens to be a former flame of McCoy's) actually died a year ago. The woman everybody *thinks* is Nancy is actually a creature native to the planet, and now she's going about killing folks. What makes this interesting is that while faux-Nancy is a very definite threat, she's also the last of her kind; and after killing Crater's wife, the two formed a bond out of the Prof's grief and the creature's apparent need to be loved.

That's some pretty dark stuff. The buffalo idea comes from Crater, trying to explain why he protected his unwife for so long. See, once upon a time, there were millions of buffalo. And then white guys showed up, and they started shooting, and eventually, the buffalo died. There used to be millions of salt vamps on planet M-113—and now, but for one, they're gone. We don't know what killed them, but we do know that Crater's pet is the last of her kind, and that once she's gone, her species will be gone forever. Crater's reasons for keeping Nancy 2 around are probably more personal than philosophical; he's lonely, and she doesn't seem that easy to kill. But that the show makes extinction a consideration at all is noteworthy, and makes Kirk and his crew's victory something less than a triumph. There's an ambiguity here that isn't just lazy writing. When Crater tells us the creature needs love, he's telling the truth, but that doesn't change what happens.

There's a bit of ambiguity in "Charlie X" too, but it doesn't work quite as well. It's not a bad episode, but I'd say it's the weakest of today's three. Our Story: The Enterprise meets up with the Antares, a science vessel with an unusual passenger, Charlie Evans, the lone survivor of a transport ship crash, left marooned on an apparent desert planet for over a decade. That Charlie survived is a miracle; he's a bit rough on manners and has a tendency to wander around the ship like a yokel in Times Square, but he's just a teenager, so it's not like it's that surprising. Unfortunately, he also has the ability to transmute matter with his mind, and he's good enough at it that he can destroy space ships, disappear anyone who gets in his way, and do moderately impressive card tricks. Yeah, that's gonna be a problem.

"Man Trap" marks the first appearance of Yeoman Janice Rand, but it's in "Charlie X" that she really takes center stage—and man, there's a reason nobody remembers her. Grace Lee Whitney is a competent actress, but her character represents some of *Trek*'s most egregious offenses against feminism. She brings people lunch, is available to be menaced when appropriate, and gets easily flustered, which happens a lot in "X" after Charlie develops a crush on her. There's a "hilarious" gag when Charlie slaps Rand on the ass, and nobody can explain to him why the gesture is inappropriate; the fact that Rand can't say a simple, "Kid, you shouldn't whack somebody," is embarrassing. Charlie's infatuation makes sense, if you can overlook Rand's hideous basket-style hairdo (nobody gets off too easy in the looks department on this show, but I'd say the women get stuck with the worst wigs), but her inability to handle the situation like an adult doesn't really fit. Of course, handling things like adults is not the Enterprise crew's strong suit, but it takes some of the fun out of things when you look at all those officers and realize that, apart from Uhura, not one of them is a woman. And Uhura's really just a glorified receptionist.

If Rand's inanity were the episode's only problem, I'd probably rate it higher than I do; but here we've got yet another threat with near limitless powers. It's like the ship keeps running afoul of the animator from "Duck Amok." Charlie's personality and relationship with Kirk make this different enough from "Where No Man Has Gone Before" that it's not

exactly a retread, but that the show was dipping this often into the god-child well is disappointing. It's just such a lazy device, the sort of thing you come up with when you don't really have any ideas. Apart from Rand, the character stuff isn't bad; Charlie looking to Kirk as a father figure fits, and gives us both a reason to believe that the kid wouldn't just lay waste to everything, as well as providing the opportunity for a fairly hilarious "fight training" sequence. But that doesn't change the fact that the ending is as blatant a *deus ex machina* as you can get without bringing in the flowered chair.

There's some good stuff; a few of Charlie's more outlandish tricks are actually disturbing (like the woman with no face), and the boy is believably whiny as someone just realizing you can't always get what you want. Plus, Charlie's agony at his defeat—his adopted alien parents show up to bring him home—has that sadness to it we were talking about; the kid's a twerp, no question, but the way he screams, "I can't even touch them!" makes you feel bad about the whole thing. As if two times weren't enough, we'll be getting another godlike twerp further into the season, with much the same resolution; only that time, the resolution is played for laughs. Here, there's something horrifying about Charlie's fate. He didn't deserve to be stranded a billion miles from home, but now he's doomed to spend the rest of his life in exile.

"The Naked Time" is probably the best of the lot for this week; it's certainly the most iconic, as nothing gets stuck in the memory quite like a shirtless George Takei running around trying to enthrall people to death. It's also the first episode of the show to focus almost entirely on the main cast; there's no shape-shifting beastly killing people, nor do we have an emo guest star for everyone to bounce off. Here the danger is entirely internal, which means there's a lot of ACTING, a lot of camp, and, depending on your tolerance level, a certain amount of pathos.

If "The Man Trap" set ground for *The X-Files*, "Time" basically built the house that "Ice" rented. The Enterprise is in orbit around Psi 2000 (I love that the supposedly scientific planet names are as well planned as the original star dates) to pick up a science team and observe the planet as it breaks apart. When Spock and proto red shirt Tormolen beam down, they find the team dead—an engineer frozen at his post, another man frozen while showering fully clothed, and a couple more corpses, each in some bizarre, seemingly inexplicable state. While Spock checks through the facility, Tormolen stays behind; and being an idiot, he takes off the glove of his bio-suit, which lets him get infected by a strange red substance that he then brings back up to the ship with him. (Although seeing how the suit's have headpieces that don't directly connect to the torso, he was probably doomed from the start.)

Soon enough, Tormolen starts acting freaky, obsessing over the dead bodies and wondering if man was really meant to explore the stars. (Shades of *Conquest of Space* here.) He ultimately ends up stabbing himself with what appears to be a butter knife and dying, but not before passing his sickness on to Sulu and the ever-annoying Riley. Soon, Sulu's swinging an epee about with wild abandon, and Riley's taken over the engine room because he thinks he's an Irish king. Spock, Kirk, and McCoy realize they have an epidemic on their hands; a highly communicable illness that brings out the repressed elements of the personality, turning Tormolen into a suicide, Sulu into a swashbuckler, and Riley into even more of a jackass than usual.

The psychological commentary of "Time" isn't exactly what you'd call subtle (why don't we have "secret me" disease?), but it's a lot of fun to watch. The build from mystery to discovery to immediate problem is well-handled, and the gradual disintegration of the ship's crew, combined with the Enterprise's slow descent towards the planet, gives us a sense of danger to rest all the silliness on. Things get especially interesting when our leads are directly affected. McCoy manages to dodge the problem completely (considering he's treating the infected and taking no real precaution against infection himself, should we assume he's immune?), but Spock gets a bad dose when Nurse Chapel, whose apparently got herself a case of logic lust, puts the moves on him. The emotions he's spent a lifetime holding at bay come to the foreground, and after making a fast exit from sickbay, Spock ducks into a briefing room, tears streaming down his face. He's freaking out; which sucks for him, but sucks even more for everyone, since he's the only one on board who can get the ship's engines running again.

Here's where that whole ACTING thing comes into play. By and large, Nimoy is the straight man to a crew of stooges, but TOS got a lot of mileage out of pushing him over the edge when it could. Kirk shows up eventually and delivers his own freak out—once again, the supposedly hotness of Yeoman Rand is apparently crucial—but Spock's is the one that hits home the hardest. You don't want to see him reduced to everyone else's level. Thankfully, after an epic slapfight, Spock regains his self-control; and of all the people who get infected in "Time," he's the only one who beats the disease on his own.

For the most part, "Time" works, but the ending is a little odd. Forced to restart the engines after Riley turns everything off, Spock and Scotty "implode" them, and the Enterprise escapes orbit; only it goes so fast that it actually travels back in time. Plot-wise, this has no effect on anything—the only go back three days, and the ep is basically over anyway. You could say that it reminds that Kirk and his crew are essentially explorers, armed with technology they can operate but whose ramifications no one completely understands. But it was probably just thrown in because the show ran a little short, and hey, who doesn't like time travel.

#### Grades:

"The Man Trap": A-

"Charlie X": B

"The Naked Time": A

#### Stray Observations:

—It's weird seeing Uhura and Chapel hit on Spock. Also weird? Uhura getting a musical number.

—When Kirk offers the Antares "entertainment tapes," is he offering them porn? I'd like to think so.

—Again we see Kirk beating Spock at chess through his "illogical" strategy. I'm not a master, but I'm pretty sure chess doesn't work like that.

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (88)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [AHoodedFigure](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 2:29pm

Charlie X sold short, at least in the fragility department

While you're right that Charlie X is a weak episode, I think there's a great feeling of the fragility of the crew's situation, similar to the feeling that you got in your review of To Bodly Go. There was a scene in the mess hall where the idea that people would go crazy from the idea that they were so far from Earth, or something to that effect (it's been a while). Definitely one of the stronger moments, for me, in the entire series, despite the episode that's wrapped around it.

Also, what would Rand's appropriate, adult reaction have been?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)AHoodedFigure

1/16/09 2:53pm

To sue Starfleet for allowing a hostile work environment.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)AHoodedFigure

1/16/09 3:43pm

Hey, maybe she did. After all, Starfleet did undergo a rather radical overhaul. Eventually, they actually allowed women to wear pants.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)AHoodedFigure

1/16/09 4:35pm



It's a tricky thing; Kirk is, after all, the captain, so it's not like she's wrong for reporting what's happening to him. I just found the whole thing distractingly high school; that she was suddenly wordless when Charlie hit on her, that her continual response to his come ons was to just keep staring politely even before they knew he had special powers... she just seems very trapped in the wrong era.

Nice comment on the "fragility," though; in some ways, I think this ep is more effective in building the threat than "Where No Man" is. It's just that some of other bits don't hold up very well. (Uhura's performance with Spock, and the idiot attempt to lock Charlie in a brig being prime examples.)

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)AHoodedFigure

1/17/09 12:29am

I don't know. I think Rand's reaction is pretty understandable even from a 21st century point of view (our 21st century). They all know that Charlie grew up outside of human socialization.

And I still don't get your hang-ups with the Spock-Uhura scenes; they're odd only in the sense that their relationship i rarely followed up. As an early episode those scenes simply suggest characterizations ultimately abandoned.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)AHoodedFigure

1/17/09 12:11pm

My hang-up is that the characerization is forced; instead of a natural conversation, you have Uhura going out of her way to comment on Spock's lack of emotion, in a way that's less about people talking about more about the scriptwriter wanting to drive home a point. It's like bad exposition—it gets the message home, but it's distracting and inorganic.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)AHoodedFigure

1/17/09 11:24pm

Again, here I disagree if we're both referring to the scene early in The ManTrap. Uhura hardly goes out of her way to call Spock on his unsociable lack of emotion; rather, she tries to flirtingly engage him in conversation only to have him come up cold (Spock: Vulcan has no moon, Miss Uhura ./ Uhura: I'm not surprised, Mr. Spock.) — Actually a subtle bit of writing that differentiates the warmly human Comm officer and the Vulcan (who the producers needed to establish in this first aired episode as being different beyond the pointed ears.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)AHoodedFigure

1/19/09 3:35pm

As far as Rand and sexual harassment goes, i read excerpts from her book on Amazon. I was expecting a warmy humorous look back a la Nimoy and Shatner's books, but instead it turns into a drama where one of the producers gets her drunk and rapes her after the filming of the episode 'Mirror Mirror' or 'Miri' (it escapes me and isn't importaznt, i guess).... It is surprisingly touching and terrifying... Apparently it lead to her quitting the series, adn more or less becoming a drunk, if I understand correctly.

And yes, I thought she was hot when I was 10....

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)AHoodedFigure

1/24/09 12:11am

As did I. Given Charlie's reaction, I'm guessing we were approaching her sweet zone. OK, that sounds dirtier than I meant it.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [spicoli323](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 1:36pm

I'll save you, fair maiden!

Uhura's response to the above from Sulu is my favorite line in Star Trek. I can see your point that Charlie X is kind of ragged around the edges, but the dude who played Charlie was awesome; he hit just the right balance of weirdly creepy and pathetically sympathetic, and that was key in holding the whole thing together.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Casterspicoli323](#)

1/16/09 3:21pm

The actor who plays Charlie really makes this one work. His whole range of emotion is pretty startling. He comes off so endearing and innocent during moments like the lounge room card trick, contrasting so much with the other times he gets mad and his head tilts down into the power kill-stare. It times like those when you know you better stop laughing at him.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Casterspicoli323](#)

1/16/09 3:22pm

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[Reply](#)

- [Benjamin\\_Barkerspicoli323](#)

1/16/09 5:11pm

It had the definite feel of being a post-"Rebel Without a Cause" performance, and he pulls it off pretty well— that kind of portrayal of unhinged adolescence that make you recall that yep, puberty sucks.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJspicoli323](#)

1/16/09 7:51pm

You know what really bothered me about the episode? How Charlie backed up from the bridge crew to stand in front of the lift when his parents came to get him. No attempt to run and hide, just him maneuvering into the best position to do the high tech fade out, and very awkwardly - there was no reason for him to move. I haven't seen this ep in years and this still bothers me.

Love Star Trek, though.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJspicoli323](#)

1/16/09 7:51pm

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Love Star Trek, though.

[Reply](#)

- [vinraithspicoli323](#)

4/11/09 7:44pm

I find the notion that anyone found Charlie sympathetic kind of odd. Given the chance, I'd have shot the murderous little shit in the face.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)spicoli323

6/20/14 6:50am

At the time the actor was considered a 'get' and was expected to go places, but he never broke out of the tv series guest of the week/ b movie roles. He's quite good here, though.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [FortyTwo](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 2:13pm

The Naked Time

I grew up during TNG's original run, so I saw "The Naked Now" before "The Naked Time." Even though TNG holds a special place in my heart, I like TOS's treatment better. It was only TNG's second episode, so I think it happened too early for them to explore the characters very well. Spock's emotional breakdown works, but Data (who was a Spock analogue early on) acting drunk was annoying and didn't fit with what the character would eventually become.

Of course, if TNG had waited to do the episode in a later season, there wouldn't have been an aggressively sexy Tasha Yar, so some people probably like it as it is.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)FortyTwo

1/16/09 3:24pm

Aggressively sexy Tasha Yar < aggressively sexy Doctor Crusher < aggressively sexy Deanna Troi.

So, yeah...I could've waited a few seasons for that.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)FortyTwo

1/16/09 3:36pm

Hey, at least Data was a happy drunk.

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)FortyTwo

1/16/09 3:52pm

@Master Plaster Blaster Caster, I'd go with: Aggressively sexy Tash Yar + aggressively sexy Doctor Crusher + aggressively sexy Deanna Troi. Actually, I'd trade it all for footage of the Vulcan chick from Enterprise felling her tricorder.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

1/16/09 7:55pm

Can you actually fellate a tricorder?

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

1/16/09 7:55pm

Can you actually fellate a tricorder?

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)FortyTwo

1/17/09 3:10pm

No only was TNG's 'Naked Now' too early in the run to make a huge impression, it made the crew look like ninnies for not immediately searching the computer for Kirk's & McCoy's logs on the matter.

Us viewers were also seriously worried that TNG would simply be recycling scripts from TOS.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 3:14pm

Damn you Harold Bloom!

First you make 10th grade english class a living hell, then you intrude on me when I'm trying to think about Yeoman Rand.

It is weird that no one remembers her. She shows up about as much as chekov or sulu. There was another guy on the bridge who was a regular character, who has also been forgotten.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Henry

1/16/09 3:26pm

Yeah. The worried, skinny white guy who was replaced by Chekov.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Henry

1/16/09 3:34pm

Not to be outdone by Mr. Leslie, a crewman who appeared in 57 episodes. He constantly changed jobs, going from the lieutenant who takes the con in one episode to a bridge engineer the next. Fuckin' guy just needed a little career direction! His greatest achievement, however, was dying in one episode only to reappear on bridge duty the very next.

Kirk wouldn't let him die...he was just that essential. Hardest working man on that ship. He was the guy behind the guy.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [bk](#)Henry

1/17/09 2:10am

Oh he's in Wrath of Khan, as well. He's crew on the Reliant. I always thought he was supposed to be a New Zealander (as a foil for Scotty's Hibernian-ness?)for some reason, doesn't he have an accent?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Henry

1/17/09 2:17am

@ Master - You are exceedingly well versed in TOS, and/or you are deeply amusing in your creative ramblings. LMAO!

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)Henry

1/17/09 3:13pm

I always thought Mr. Leslie was English, but Kiwi is fun, too.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 2:16pm

Where are my footnotes?

A minor point, but to what does the "flowered chair" refer? I am shamed by my ignorance.

[Reply](#)

- [GeoGreg](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/16/09 2:36pm

I'm guessing the "machina" that lowered the "deus" to the stage in classical drama used a flowered chair as the deity transportation system. Just a guess though.

[Reply](#)

- [Eddard Stark](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/16/09 2:56pm

DING. We have a winner. Give that poster a prize...

[Reply](#)

- [Eddard Stark](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/16/09 2:56pm

DING. We have a winner. Give that poster a prize...

[Reply](#)

- [Eddard Stark](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/16/09 4:01pm

I think there's an echo in here.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/17/09 2:15am

Why flowered, though?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/19/09 3:31pm

Are you saying God uses ropes!

There goes my whole theological system...

[Reply](#)

- [Korbie](#)Eddard Stark

6/19/13 1:18pm

Boy, I know why you stopped commenting.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

1/19/09 11:53am

Velvet Bloom Chair

Really enjoying this so far, and it's about time, but why three episodes at a time?

And while I quite enjoy abstruse commentary, how far are you going to go without explainng Velvet Underground, Harold Bloom and God's Flower Chair for the uninitiated....

I'm sure your average reader is a sabove-average as an Keillor Public Radio ST TOS fan, but still! You explain TOS but not Bloom?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Richelieu Jr

1/19/09 12:41pm

Three episodes was sort of an "industry standard" thing; it's what Noel runs each week on his "Buffy" recaps, and it's what I used to do with "X-Files." However, I'm not really happy with this weeks's recap, so I'm going to gear down to two a week this Friday—that should both make it possible to (theoretically, anyway) cover the entire series run before our sun dies, as well as give me enough breathing room to expound without feeling rushed.

As for references, well, explaining everything kills the joke. (One could argue that you can't kill what's already dead, in which case one would make me sad.) I check the comments obssemi-regularly, though, so if anybody's confused, I'm more than happy to footnote.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

1/19/09 3:45pm

Thanks for the reply man.

Glad you're gearing it down, and as it happens,  
your jokes both make me laugh and feed my need to feel superior to others  
without expending too much effort,  
so rock on!

[Reply](#)

- [Zuul](#)Richelieu Jr

1/20/09 12:11am

So wait...does this mean that, given enough time, you'll end up doing the rest of the Star Treks? Even the much-reviled Enterprise? Cause I could totally get behind you on that.

[Reply](#)

- [Holland Oates](#)Richelieu Jr

2/07/09 2:04am

If these are taking too long, just implode the engines on your PC, Zack.

I didn't get any of the above references, but that's part of the fun of realizing what you meant years down the road. I think.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 1:39pm

Just a simple Irish ditty

Is The Naked Time the one where Riley sings "I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen?" If it is — yeah, that's pretty annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/17/09 2:12am

Wildly out of tune, no less. Oy.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

1/19/09 6:22pm

Yeah, I also loved Riley's singing to the crew. It was so annoying that it went right around the other side and became funny again.

[Reply](#)

- [Holland Oates](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/07/09 1:44am

I came back in time to comment.

I loved Kirk quietly saying "Please don't" or something to that effect as Riley prepares to start the song over, having been interrupted.

The only problem with the above comment posters? They weren't born Irish.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/27/09 11:59pm

"Please— not again."

[Reply](#)

- [AHoodedFigure](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 2:29pm

Charlie X sold short, at least in the fragility department

While you're right that Charlie X is a weak episode, I think there's a great feeling of the fragility of the crew's situation, similar to the feeling that you got in your review of To Bodly Go. There was a scene in the mess hall where the idea that people would go crazy from the idea that they were so far from Earth, or something to that effect (it's been a while). Definitely one of the stronger moments, for me, in the entire series, despite the episode that's wrapped around it.

Also, what would Rand's appropriate, adult reaction have been?

[Reply](#)

- [AHoodedFigure](#)AHoodedFigure

1/16/09 2:41pm

argh, stupid thing. Why can't we delete our own posts?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)AHoodedFigure

1/16/09 3:15pm

If we can't delete, then editing would be nice. But, oh, that would be very complicated.

[Reply](#)

- [JGabriel](#)AHoodedFigure

1/17/09 1:51am

Not really. Balloon Juice lets people edit their comments for the first five minutes after they've been posted.

It's enough time for people to catch and correct their typos, without being so much time that they can go back and change the whole meaning of a thread.

.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen

1/19/09 12:56am

Little Gods

Just how many all powerful beings exist in the Star Trek universe? Gary Mitchell, Squire of Gothos, Adonis, Charlie X,

and Q are the ones I can think of off the top of my head but I'm sure there's more. And of course there was the whole race of Organians who were all god like.

[Reply](#)

- [twif](#)MovieMike

1/23/09 1:50pm

don't forget they turned Wesley Crusher into a god-like being too. oh, and that TNG ep. with the teenage Q girl. Q was not really "all powerful" either, as he had limits. granted, they were imposed by other beings of his ilk, but still: truly omnipotent beings cannot be stripped of their powers.

[Reply](#)

- [try the veal its the best in t](#)MovieMike

6/13/13 8:32pm

Someone really ought to retcon them all into being part of the Continuum.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bMovieMike

6/20/14 6:27am

There probably ended up being about a dozen on TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [feitclub](#)Zack Handlen

1/17/09 3:39am

Acronym Issues

TOS = The Original Series, not Trek the Original. If that were the case, we'd be calling Voyager "TV"

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)feitclub

1/17/09 12:06pm

Um, yeah, I was just being silly. I figured most everyone reading this would know what TOS stood for, and if they didn't, I could explain in the comments.

[Reply](#)

- [feitclub](#)feitclub

1/20/09 7:37am

I guess that came out harsher than I meant it. I thought the "TV" remark was enough to keep it light. My bad.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)feitclub

1/20/09 9:14am

No worries; it was actually a reasonable point, since I was just being weird for weird's sake.

[Reply](#)

- [Random Exposition](#)Zack Handlen

8/18/12 11:44pm

Regarding the environmental suits in "The Naked Time" - not only do the hoods not connect to anything, but the face windows are patterned (because they are made of clear, patterned shower curtains.) So you have a suit made to protect you while allowing you to explore up close which then impairs your vision while exposing your respiratory system, eyes, and ears to any and all airborne contaminants. AND they're unflattering! WORST SUITS EVER.

And while this wasn't evident so early in the series, they really almost never wear suits like this again - they just beam down in regular uniforms - so in retrospect, the suits were a special precaution for a highly dangerous situation, and



you'd expect anyone wearing one to be aware of protocols in biohazard situations. But instead of rubbing his itching nose with his gloved hand through the flexible face window...sigh.

[Reply](#)

- [Marty McKee](#)Random Exposition

4/03/14 11:43am

I love "The Naked Time," but it has always bothered me that an Enterprise crewman could be that stupid.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Random Exposition

6/20/14 6:21am

Right? I've never understood why they didn't just introduce an unobtrusive tear in the suit instead of asking us to believe someone highly trained would do something so obviously idiotic.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 6:05pm

Riley

interesting that you'd call him out for being annoying, as i never gave him much thought. though i do admit that i like The Conscience of The King, which he plays a major part in. i hope that episode gets a write-up here.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)tibber

1/16/09 7:59pm

Second on Conscience of the King. He's also an integral part in the plot of one of the better TOS book series.

Yes, I've read a lot of the books, too.

What do you mean, that's why I was a virgin until 24?

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)tibber

1/16/09 7:59pm

Second on Conscience of the King. He's also an integral part in the plot of one of the better TOS book series.

Yes, I've read a lot of the books, too.

What do you mean, that's why I was a virgin until 24?

[Reply](#)

- [Marty McKee](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/14 11:42am

"Charlie X" used to be not a favorite of mine, but watching it again last night, I was really touched by the performances by Shatner and Walker. The scene where Kirk talks to Charlie about the birds and the bees is terrifically acted, and I love Kirk's defense of Charlie to the Thasian at the end ("The boy belongs with his own kind."), even after Charlie's murder of the twenty aboard the Antares. Even this early, STAR TREK wasn't afraid to fade out on a bumner of an ending.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Marty McKee

6/20/14 6:19am

I agree, and it's remarkable how much Shatner used quiet and how often he underplayed in especially season one. Apparently, so I've heard, he was panicked by Nimoy's extraordinary popularity and by a painful divorce into some of

his later histrionics. Even in season one when the acting gets physical he tends to overdo it, though, so the hamminess was definitely always there.

Too bad, though. He was a gifted, well trained actor. He could have gone in a rather different direction. The skills were certainly present.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 3:15pm

Damn you Harold Bloom!

First you make 10th grade english class a living hell, then you intrude on me when I'm trying to think about Yeoman Rand.

It is weird that no one remembers her. She shows up about as much as chekov or sulu. There was another guy on the bridge who was a regular character, who has also been forgotten.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bHenry

6/20/14 6:39am

I think she tends to get forgotten since she appeared in all of seven episodes, or far fewer than either sulu or chekhov. You might be thinking of eddie paskey who played Lt. Leslie in sixty frickin' episodes. I had no idea it was one-quarter that number. So, more than eight times as many appearances as Rand. That's what a beehive'll getcha.

[Reply](#)

- [Mark2000](#)Zack Handlen

10/25/11 11:22pm

One of the things people complain about in Man Trap is that Kirk is inconsistent about killing a creature here and then in Devil in the Dark. But I see these as very different situations. In Devil the Horta proves it is acting in self defense. In Trap the Salt creature is clearly a psychopath. It's intelligent. It knows it's stalking other intelligent creatures. It even has an ample supply of salt about to be delivered. It likes killing for the sake of it. I mean, the thing even tries to rationalize it's behavior to the crew via the McCoy mirage. It's clearly crazy.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bMark2000

6/20/14 6:22am

In Man Trap the character is also in the process of killing when Kirk shoots it, so there's that.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 3:57pm

Salt Vampires Need Love

It's interesting that you point out the alien's need for love in 'The Man Trap'. There's a scene when the vampire is alone in a room with McCoy after he's taken some sleeping pills and it doesn't attack him. I don't think that was bad writing. I think they were trying to show that the alien had made some emotional connection with McCoy and couldn't bring itself to kill him, just like he was struggling at the end even after it had revealed its true form.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Breakfast Balls

1/17/09 11:27am

Subtext becomes plot when you actually pay attention to what you're watching.

[Reply](#)

- [Karatloz](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 3:39pm

"The Naked Man Trap."

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Karatloz

1/16/09 3:51pm

Starring Doris Day and Rock Hudson.

[Reply](#)

- [camipco](#)Karatloz

1/17/09 1:29am

Starring James Dean and Rock Hudson, please.

[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 10:27pm

d

charlie x was always my favorite episode from when i was a highly silly teenager, and i haven't spent any time revisiting any of them so it remains so. as a poster above mentioned charlie has exactly the right amount of creepiness and sympathy to really affect me. star trek was one of the first shows i personally saw that urged you to feel bad for the "villain" in a way that kind of unsettled you.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)imnotfredmcgriff

1/17/09 2:24am

It's not the "creepiness and sympathy" that get to you. It's his eyebrows.

[Reply](#)

- [Heradite](#)Zack Handlen

1/22/12 10:44pm

Not that anyone is going to read this, but when Sulu invited Riley down to the gym and knowing George Takei's sexuality...it definably sounded like Sulu was hoping to sleep with Riley.

[Reply](#)

- [A Suffusion of Yellow](#)Heradite

1/28/12 11:09pm

I definitely got the same impression. The manic shirtlessness may or may not have contributed as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bZack Handlen

6/20/14 6:15am

"The psychological commentary of "Time" isn't exactly what you'd call subtle (why don't we have "secret me" disease?) ..."

We do. We call it alcoholism. Or parenting.

"Again we see Kirk beating Spock at chess through his "illogical" strategy. I'm not a master, but I'm pretty sure chess doesn't work like that."

Quite correct. In chess inspiration shades into logic since the former can never be illogical and succeed. Moves can appear counterintuitive, but since the best moves by definition win it's hard to see how winning chess can ever be illogical.

Hey, it's rare when a tv chessboard is even set up to make sense, so points to TOS for trying, and for having a believable game on the board.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 9:34pm

"I want to stay—stay—stay...."

I disagree a little with Zack's viewing of some of the performances and dialogue in these early episodes as being "forced" or "corny"—I find these early episodes, aside from being really beautifully shot and scored, to have a decidedly naturalistic vibe especially when compared to when the series becomes, admittedly, a little more loose and fun, but when the characters, and their behavior, also becomes more or less written in stone.

And I have to mention the beautiful music scores again — one scene that Zack mentions, Charlie X's unwilling return to his alien masters, is hauntingly enhanced by the score.

[Reply](#)

- [Mark C Still](#)Zack Handlen

3/31/17 2:26am

(1) The God-child cliché? From the show that invented the god-child cliché, and its first episode to do exactly that - which means it wasn't a cliché then, was it? (2) TOS was sexist but given that, Rand acted consistently within those parameters. And Kirk couldn't find the words to tell Charlie, either, about his breach of etiquette. So the shame goes all around. I suspect the actual reason is that the TV censors didn't allow that particular piece of the anatomy to be mentioned. (3) AND BY THE WAY..... how do you call out the show for sexism yet you still get to be as ass toward the Irish???

[Reply](#)

- [Mick Travis](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 8:39pm

Chess

If both players play completely logically, games would always end in draws. Ideally you hope that your opponent fucks up and plays an illogical move that you then capitalize upon. At the grandmaster level, however, they train such that this rarely happens, so often they have to employ seeming illogical moves and sequences to throw their opponent off. They are not, of course, illogical in the strategic sense, because they serve the purpose of ultimately winning against an opponent too skilled to fuck up on his own.

Really, Spock should know this.

[Reply](#)

- [Cliffy](#)Zack Handlen

4/11/12 7:06pm

One interesting facet — originally, when Sulu caught the bug in The Naked Time, he was supposed to run around pretending to be a samurai. Takei suggested that his character would be more interested in swashbuckling adventure instead, just as he was. As bad as Trek was to modern eyes, it'd be more than another 30 years before most Asians on TV weren't indelibly associated with orientalism in every possible instance.

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 6:07pm

Illogical chess

But it's not chess, it's some 3-D chess variant. It looks like the 3rd dimension is emotion-related - perhaps the secret is love! And Spock's a green-blooded mutant that'll never be able to counter a love-based 3-D chess strategy.

[Reply](#)

- [jstern2](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/09 9:45pm

RSS Feed

Is there a way to get an RSS feed to just these Star Trek TOS reviews or to any individual TV show's reviews? Did what I say just make sense?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Enemy Within"/"Mudd's Women"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 22, 2009

[Comments \(113\)](#)



First, some housecleaning: I wasn't all that happy with the way the last entry turned out, so I'm going to gear down from three to two episodes a week. At the very least, things won't feel quite so rushed. Also, no update next week, as I'll be on vacation in Chicago, but we'll back for February, so no worries. For those of you playing a long at home who haven't heard about it, you can watch [the original Trek via CBS.com](#). It's only available in the states, and I can't vouch for the visual quality, but it's free, at least.

Now, back to our regularly scheduled review...

TOS was never big on continuity; there are bits here and there, but in general, the episodes don't comment on each other in the way we expect these days from even our most self-contained series. But by coincidence or intention, "The Enemy Within" makes for an interesting response to the directly preceding "Naked Time." Whereas "Time" was about the whole crew succumbing to their basest desires, "Enemy" focuses on one man divided against himself; and since that one man is Kirk, we're talking about some seriously complicated math.

The Enterprise is in orbit around a new planet, with Kirk, Sulu and a surveying team scurrying about on the surface, doing science-y things, walking the space dog (or whatever the hell it is Sulu has in his arms), and working hard to get finished before nightfall. The planet doesn't seem all that comfortable even in the daylight—constant wind, lots of fake rocks—but once the sun sets, the temperature drops rapidly till bottoming out at 120 degrees below zero. Since as far as we can tell nobody on the ground has much in the way of protection beyond a few blankets and their uniforms, the hard freeze makes an already dangerous situation becomes that much more deadly.

Still, it shouldn't be too big a deal to get back; after all, we've got those magical transporters. Unfortunately, one of the techs on the ground gets himself covered in some magnetic dust, and when he's beamed back to the ship, the dust screws up the energizers somehow. Nobody notices the problem, and Kirk comes up next; he seems fine at first, if a little dazed, and Spock leads him out of the room with a suggestion he make a quick stop off at Sick Bay. Too bad they didn't wait another minute, because when the transporter tech comes back, there's another person stuck in the matrix. A quick flip of the switch, and out pops EVIL KIRK!

Hooooo boy.

Apart from his fevered monologue in "Time," "Enemy" provides William Shatner with his first chance to really, really tear things up, and as EVIL KIRK he does his level best to leave no plywood wall uneaten. Generally I enjoy Shatner's theatrics; he sets the tone for the series, and his commitment to the role helps sell some of the sillier effects work. But every so often he goes over the edge, and EK is a prime example. In some scenes he does well, but others—like his "Emcee from *Cabaret*" style introduction—are just so hilariously awkward that they kick you right out of the episode. I don't have a problem with ham, but I do have a problem with acting that looks like a first take with no direction and no restrictions. It makes sense that EK is at his goofiest when he's alone on screen; without another actor to play off of, Shatner has to supply all the beats, and he can't quite manage it.

That said, there are *two* Kirks this time around, and Shatner's performance as the "good" side is very solid stuff. Even before you know why, you get a clear sense of him being diminished, and there's a certain tragedy to his rapidly softening presence. The basic plot of "Enemy" is a familiar one; I think two thirds of the cartoons I watched growing up had an ep devoted to somebody getting Jekyll-and-Hyde-ed. But it works here, because, theatrics aside, the acting is solid, and the script (penned by genre stalwart Richard Matheson) is thoughtful and logically laid out. When EK starts running around the ship threatening people, Spock and the Good Kirk immediately figure out the problem (with a little help from a bifurcated space dog); there are a few moments of mistaken identity, but the plot doesn't waste our time with them.

One of those mistaken identity moments is worth mentioning, as it gives us this week's installment in Everybody Loves Rand. After EK busts into Sick Bay demanding Saurian Brandy from McCoy (an aside: EK's obviously going where he knows the booze is, but I like how EK winds up talking to McCoy first, while GK goes with Spock), he makes an impromptu visit to the yeoman's cabin. Shatner turns down the volume for most of this scene, and it's terrifically creepy, with Rand balancing her feelings for Kirk, their respective positions aboard their ship, and the physical threat a drunken, horny sociopath represents. For the most part, "Enemy" relegates EK to yelling and grimacing, but for those few minutes, the danger of having the most important person in the crew's little universe reduced to his basest instincts becomes horribly relevant. (Which makes it all the weirder when Rand's two encounters with EK are reduced to a bad joke from Spock at the end.)

The first two acts of the episode play out smoothly; we get ourselves a threat, we discover that threat is more complicated than we initially believed (there's an Evil Kirk! Oh crap, the good Kirk is a total wuss!), and all the while, lives are in danger on the planet below because of the malfunctioning transporters. This gets a little silly—I can't help wondering what sort of degree system the Federation uses, since 120 below seems immediately fatal in Celsius *and* Fahrenheit—but it ensures that the problem of the two Kirks is more than just a philosophical one. Writing-wise, my only real issue is that the third act seems redundant; Spock figures out that the Kirks need to re-integrate fairly early on, and there are no new revelations after that point. Having EK trapped in Sick Bay, only to break out and run up to the Bridge, was fairly unnecessary, although Shatner does some nice work here with both sides of the personality. In the end, Kirk becomes singular again, Sulu and his frozen friends are rescued in the nick of time (funny how nobody mentions using the shuttlecraft to go pick them up), and a valuable lesson is learned by all: that a man without at least a little monster in him isn't much of a man at all.

So let's see. We've had a couple of super-power episodes, a mind-warping virus episode, and a sci-fi metaphor episode, but I'd say that "Mudd's Women" is the first overtly comic episode of the series. It has some sci-fi elements, of course, and it gets a little serious by the end, but at by and large this is the kind of "whacky guest star" ep that would become a staple of *Treks* down the line. Harcourt Fenton Mudd may not have the powers of a Q being, but he does have a sense of humor, an ego, and the unshakable presumption that the rules are largely a matter of someone else's problem. With TOS, the jokes don't always work; there's a tendency, especially in later seasons, to go overly broad, punctuating every gag with a double-take and musical sting. For seem reason, I'd assumed "Women" worked much the same, but re-watching it, I was happy to find I was misremembering. Some of the jokes centering on the male crew's immediate obsession with Mudd's lovely ladies fall flat, but in general, this one has a pleasantly light touch, helped out by some clever character work and an enthusiastic performance from Roger C. Carmel.

The Enterprise comes across an unidentified ship in their travels, and when they try and make contact, the ship immediately bolts; this being fairly suspicious behavior, the Enterprise follows, eventually forcing the other ship into an

asteroid belt where it overheats and explodes. Fortunately, Scotty and crew are able to beam the ship's four passengers aboard before the explosion, but the pursuit burns out a number of the Enterprise's lithium crystals, leaving them in a bad state. For their pains, they've managed to capture a large guy dressed in clothes apparently stolen from a high school drama club, as well as three women whose impact on every man they meet (apart from Spock) is immediate and devastating. The guy in the goofy outfit claims to be Captain Leo Walsh, and the women—well, they have names, but honestly, when you look that good, you don't really *need* a name.

Kirk smells a rat, even after meeting with the hotties, and for good reason. Captain Leo Walsh is not a captain, nor is he a Leo Walsh; his real name is Harry Mudd, and he's got a rap sheet as broad as his belly. He claims to be on a purely legitimate errand, ferrying the women (Ruth, Magda, and Eve, aka, The Conflicted One) to Ophiucus III so they can pick up husbands, but Kirk isn't convinced. There's something strange going on here, and it has something to do with the way the men can't stop staring at Eve and her friends. Sure they've been in space a while, but the Enterprise is a coed operation. The women are beautiful, but "pound for pound" (as McCoy delicately puts it) are they really that much more beautiful than any other pretty girl?

They aren't, honestly; Mudd's been giving them a "performance enhancer" called the Venus drug, but even when they're at they're supposedly most desirable, none of the women seems to justify the saxophone music that follows them wherever they go. But maybe that's part of the point; as Kirk ultimately explains, there are only two kinds of people in this world, those who believe in themselves and those who don't. The looks aren't as important as the way they're carried, and all Eve needs is a little Dumbo-esque magic to let her stand on her own.

Much has been made of how TOS is basically a Western in outer space, and there are times in "Women" when the tech trappings seem to have been forgotten altogether. After the last lithium crystal burns out, the Enterprise heads to a mining planet to pick up some spares; Mudd, through careful application of his Angels on the ship's crew, manages to make contact with the miners before Kirk does, and offers up the women in exchange for his freedom, and the command of the ship. Obviously this doesn't sit well with Kirk, so there are some tense dialogues both on the Enterprise and on the planet surface—a surface that, weird colored rocks aside, wouldn't have looked all that out of place in an episode of *Bonanza*. The miners themselves, led by a man named Childress, are a tough looking crew, and there's some unpleasantness between them when the women finally beam down. It seems bizarre that you'd only need three guys to mine a planet, and that their living quarters are rustic despite being, as we're repeatedly told, fabulously wealthy; and the fact that Kirk puts up with them as long as he does doesn't really make sense. (Even if he couldn't call for Federation back-up to put pressure on Childress, he could at least threaten to send a message letting the folks back home know that the miners were willing to let over four hundred people die for sheer stubbornness.) But as flaws go, these are minor; the tension created by the situation, even if it doesn't entirely make sense, is good enough that I don't mind suspending a bit more disbelief than usual.

And man, Harry Mudd is a lot of fun. I think it's the way he manages to roll every piece of dialogue that comes out of his mouth; he's like the budget Zero Mostel, and even with his ridiculous costume and distracting neck hair (seriously, I can't imagine what watching this in high-def is like—I kept wanting to shave my TV), he makes a great foil for Kirk, and a nice change of pace from most of the villains we've dealt with so far. Carmel comes back for another go-round in the second season in "I, Mudd," and it's not hard to see why they brought him back. Recurring characters outside the main leads are great for world-building, but I imagine Mudd was a lot of fun to write for, too. It's a familiar character type, but an enjoyable one.

Like I said, I was surprised at how much I enjoyed this on seeing it again. I especially like the tone shift in the final act—it's a risky move, taking the focus largely away from the Enterprise crew and putting it on Eve and Childress, but it works. The two have a nice chemistry together, and I like how neither of them come off as particularly bright or remarkable; just two frustrated people trying to figure out if they fit together. As always with TOS's sentimental moments, we're skirting the line between corny and authentic, but in this case, it's largely successful.

In the end, the women get their husbands (although is anybody else creeped out wondering what happens to Ruth and Magda when they run out of meds? Childress wasn't too happy, and he seemed like the most normal of the lot), the Enterprise is saved, and Mudd is on his way back to the authorities, sputtering all the while. Kirk, after being briefly tempted by Eve, has remained true to his first and only love, and McCoy has gotten several eyefuls worth of lady flesh. Oh, and Spock? He gets some really good smirking in there, so everybody goes home happy.



## Grades:

“The Enemy Within”: A-

“Mudd’s Women”: A

## Stray Observations:

—Continuity alert: at the start of “Enemy,” Kirk’s uniform doesn’t have the standard Starfleet insignia on it, but it comes back after the opening credits. Wacky!

—Didn’t talk about them much, but Spock’s disdainful reaction shots through the first half of “Mudd’s Women” are hilarious.

—Riley’s gone for now, and in his place we’ve got Johnny Farrell. He’s—goony looking.

—Next week: Vacation! Week of February 6<sup>th</sup>: "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" and "Miri"

## DISCUSSION

- Community (113)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [wookie](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 11:26am

Where is the federation?

I'm way ahead now, and realizing how few of the episodes I have actually seen. I watch TNG religiously, but as a kid couldn't get past the cheese of the original and it seems I didn't see many of these early episodes.

What is surprising to me in watching these is how little of the mythology is actually present in these early episodes. Zack mentions the Federation, but I don't think they even mention it until much later in the season. It is an "Earth Ship." The Prime Directive doesn't show up until the end of the season and the Vulcans are offhandedly mentioned as a defeated race, as if they had a war with Earth and are now part of their empire. (I have heard they are the Japanese, the Romulans are the Chinese and the Klingons are the Russians, but still.) Maybe I shouldn't be surprised, but those parts of the Star Trek Universe are so ingrained in me, it seems hard to believe they weren't there from the beginning.

Anyway, I'm enjoying these write-ups and it gave me an excuse to go back and watch these. Thanks Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [scottebwookie](#)

1/23/09 11:29am

It's great to rewatch these old episodes and realize that we take for granted that all this stuff was etched in stone, but they were really making it up as they went along.

[Reply](#)

- [Hear God Laugh](#)wookie

1/23/09 11:41am

If "Star Trek" was created by George Lucas rather than Gene Roddenberry, half of the dialogue in "The Next Generation" would be painfully explaining away all the inconsistencies with the first series.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chancellor Puddinghead](#)wookie

1/23/09 11:47am

I wouldn't use the word suprising to describe the lack of mythology in TOS. We're talking about a show that has (at the time) only been on for a couple weeks, and even in the first season it's future wasn't entirely clear. What the first season was supposed to be, as I have heard it described by multiple sources, was "Wagon Train....IN SPACE!". Just another western, except instead of horses, sheriffs and horses and guns, we get captains, starships and phasers.

There's a pretty good book out there by the guy the wrote Trouble with Tribbles called "The World of Star Trek". It has some insight into what went into writing an episode, as well as some very funny commentary on the actors. I don't know if its still in print, but it's a quick read and quite enlightening.

And I always thought the Romulans were supposed to be the Russians. The secretive race that we seem to be a war with, but through various treaties and threats of mutual destruction, keep to themselves.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)wookie

1/23/09 12:16pm

since, according to the eventual canon, earth was never at war with vulcan, pegging them as the japanese doesn't really fit either, despite genetic similarities between vulcans and romulans. think of those analogies as loose approximations of what the original intent was rather than hard and fast parallels and you'll be a lot happier.

"If "Star Trek" was created by George Lucas rather than Gene Roddenberry, half of the dialogue in "The Next Generation" would be painfully explaining away all the inconsistencies with the first series."

something i always liked about star trek is that they, at least to a certain extent, realize that it's a show and not everything needs to be explained and clarified. my favorite moment in which the show directly addresses some of the shows' inconsistencies in in the ds9 ep. "trials and tribbleations" in which the crew get a hold of what klingons used to look like and warf refuses to offer any explanation except "we don't like to talk about it" or some such. (feel free to correct me - my memory ain't what it used to be.)

[Reply](#)

- [Chancellor Puddinghead](#)wookie

1/23/09 12:18pm

"It's not something we discuss with outsiders." - Worf

[Reply](#)

- [wookie](#)wookie

1/23/09 12:20pm

They explained it Enterprise, however.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)wookie

1/23/09 12:28pm

But did they explain Enterprise?

Really? Wow, that was rather fucking up what had been a nice joke in DS9.

DS9 > all other ST series

[Reply](#)

- [mmy](#)wookie

1/23/09 12:30pm

"Enterprise": It's not something we discuss with outsiders." -Trekkies

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:09pm

Vulcans = Chinese  
Romulans = Russians  
Klingons = Arabs  
Ferengi = Jews  
Cardassians = Iranians

[Reply](#)

- [Mclovin](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:23pm

I always thought the obvious representations in the original series were

Klingons=Russia  
Romulans= China  
Vulcans= Japan

[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:34pm

really, you should have two lists.

Vulcans, Romulans, Klingons, Ferengi, Cardassians = fake made up alien people  
and

Chinese, Russians, Arabs, Jews, Iranians = actual groups of real people who are alive and exist in the world.

be careful how you use those =, kids.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:37pm

Very funny, mmy!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:40pm

Negroes = Indians

[Reply](#)

- [OnanRulz](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:46pm

No, no.

Bajorans=Jews  
Cardassians=Germans

[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)wookie

1/23/09 1:52pm

but you see, ferengi are obsessed with money. therefore they = jews.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)wookie

1/23/09 2:04pm

You're all wrong

Bajor=Tibet

Cardassia=China

[Reply](#)

- [OnanRulz](#)wookie

1/23/09 2:05pm

OK, then I'll redefine.

Bajorans=Israelis

[Reply](#)

- [twif](#)wookie

1/23/09 2:08pm

i might be stretching things here, but i always thought the romulans were based on, oh i dunno, the roman empire or something.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)wookie

1/23/09 2:14pm

David Gerrold was the guy who wrote the "Trouble With Tribbles" (and the animated "More Tribbles, More Troubles"), as well as the World of Star Trek book.

@Unregistered Nickname is right: it was one of the first looks at the show to make it to print, and because "Tribbles" was so popular, he had some serious access.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)wookie

1/23/09 2:54pm

I started watching TOS in sequence back in November as a total Star Trek ignoramus, having only seen the first few movies (a super duper long time ago).

I'm near the end of season one, and so far

\* no Kling-ons

\* only one Romulan episode, but the episode they're in is very interesting, and my favorite so far

\* hardly any continuity whatsoever — "Court Martial" being followed directly by the "Menagerie" is particularly jarring

\* nothing whatsoever about any Prime Directive, I don't even know what that is yet

\* Spock kicks ass. It's like he's just fucking around when he says he has no emotion, because he's constantly either acting smug, or curious, or confounded by those human's wacky behavior.

Also, I hated "Mudd's Women". That actor who played Mudd was just a big cheeseball, it was hard to think of him as any threat whatsoever. Whereas I loved Shatner's scene chewin' in "Enemy Within".

[Reply](#)

- [Chancellor Puddinghead](#)wookie

1/23/09 3:22pm

The book has a great part where Mr. Gerrod mentions that one could make an educated guess as to how far into filming a specific episode or scene was shot by gauging the size of Shatner's gut. It seems that during the off time, Shatner would workout and eat right so that at the beginning of filming for the next season, he would look good. As filming went on, however, Shatner stopped working out and ate more crap. As a result, the episodes filmed last in a season show Bill with a bit of a gut,

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)wookie

1/23/09 11:10pm

No, dammit—

Bajorans = Israeli Jews

Vulgans = the mystical, Kabbalist Jews

Ferengi = the Antisemite's Jews

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)wookie

1/24/09 6:40am

JEWS IN SPAAAAACE!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)wookie

1/24/09 11:24am

Bajorans = Fundamentalist Christians!

[Reply](#)

- [Ukridge](#)wookie

1/24/09 9:33pm

Bynars = Welsh

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)wookie

1/27/09 4:40am

The Gerrold book is great: It also includes an incident where he drops some lettuce down Nichelle Nicole's cleavage and si really embarrassed, but he just scoops it out!

There are also lots of good tips for aspiring screenwriters...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)wookie

1/28/09 1:32pm

@Emperor Jim: If that's true, then Behr isn't very bright. That's a lousy parallel. It's almost a perpendicular!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 11:17am

Lithium?

It's DIlithium, dumbass. Sigh, people who don't know the first thing about ST just make me want to give them a red shirt for xmas.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:23am

Don't be hating.

Lets give the man some credit for attempting to write reviews for a hipster classic knowing full well every douche on these boards will be correcting him at every attempt (see my second post, above). We at least can keep it civil.

[Reply](#)

- [Paul Reda](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:26am

Actually, in this episode it was "lithium crystals." Kinda goes back to what Zack was saying about TOS not being big on continuity.

Five minutes in the agony booth for you!

[3](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:28am

Actually, they're called "lithium crystals" in this episode.

[4](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:30am

Echo, echo, echo.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:31am

Man, they powered the Enterprise on watch batteries? C'mon, science, get on building us a starship!

[Reply](#)

- [Hear God Laugh](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:34am

ANOTHER TRUE STORY:

A friend and I once spent about an hour at a dive bar listening to some old wastoid telling stories about hollowed-out volcanoes in Hawaii where the government performs mind-controlling experiments on people, blah, blah, blah. When I asked him why some sinister gov't organization hadn't silenced him yet, he replied, "The government doesn't care what I say because legally I'm considered insane. I have to take dilithium or I have psychotic episodes."

Then he went to the bathroom and my buddy says, "Wasn't dilithium what they used to power the Enterprise?" and we both laughed.

The weirdest thing was we never saw him come out of the restroom. We were convinced that he got "beamed" somewhere.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 11:37am

Really? Wow. Agony booth it is.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 12:27pm

I hate to pile on to penis van lesbian, since he's already been told. But if he's referencing the episode where evil spock tortures evil crew members on the evil enterprise, he uses the "agonizer," a little device that everyone is forced to carry around. Which is a much funnier concept

Although I do remember some kind of torture booth from another episode.

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 12:36pm

The agonizer was used for minor transgressions. The agony booth was used for more serious punishment.

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 1:04pm

The agonizer was used if you only wanted a hint of agony in a room, just to freshen it up a little.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 4:07pm

It's funny, the weird little counter-continuity wordings that pop up in early TOS, like Spock referring to himself as a "Vulcanian" a couple of times.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 4:27pm

That just means he was from Vulcania, the capitol of Vulcan.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 5:36pm

BTW, I forgot to mention, but my "dumbass" was not meant seriously.

Is it too soon to assume that any snark regarding STTOS is not meant to be taken seriously?

[Reply](#)

- [That Cartoon Mouse](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 6:35pm

Yeah, I think the early episodes they called them lithium crystals, but I think Gene and the writers eventually thought that lithium didn't seem advanced enough, so they changed to dilithium.

[Reply](#)

- [CW](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/23/09 7:11pm

It's at least twice as future-y.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/24/09 12:44am

It's the same reason lasers became phaser. More phuturistic.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/24/09 1:14am

We've secretly replaced the dilithium crystals normally used to run the Enterprise with Folger's. Let's see if they can tell the difference.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Preparation Heche](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/24/09 3:30am

Star Trek = "hipster classic"?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Penis Van Lesbian

1/24/09 6:34am

Son oF A Bitch! SON OF A BITCH!

Hear God Laugh: I liked your story. Maybe the guy lived above the bar? maybe he crawled out the window? were you guys waiting for him to come out of the bathroom? cause he prob just left then.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 11:12am

Spock

I'm pretty sure smirky is an emotion. Just saying.

Also- woo hoo!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 11:14am

Yeah, but with \_this\_ Spock, it's not that he's emotionless; it's that he keeps his emotions in check. Occasionally, the snark gets the better of him.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 11:19am

In addition, I believe the "standard Starfleet insignia" on the shirts was actually Enterprise-specific. You'll note in the earlier episodes characters from other ships had other insignia. By the time the movies and TNG rolled around the / thing became the standard.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 11:26am

Dammit, I keep forgetting that Zack is doing this show on Fridays. I spent last night playing CivIII, when I could have been watching TOS. I have to make sure I watch for next time, "Miri" was a great episode.

Also, if there are any AV Club IT guys reading this, love the pretty blue text for links you just set up, but I was thinking, could you maybe get around to fixing a few of the little bugs around here, like maybe, I don't know, FIXING THE FACT THAT WHEN I CLICK "POST A NEW COMMENT" ON THIS SHITTY WEBSITE ALL I GET IS A BLANK BOX THAT I CAN'T TYPE IN!!!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)john barleycorn must diet



1/23/09 11:37am

"Miri" always creeped me out a bit. But it is a very memorable episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Chancellor Puddinghead](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 12:17pm

I always though the insignia was specific to the section of Star Fleet they were in. Administration (Admirals and such) had one, Exploration (Enterprise) had another, Trade had one and so on. I could be wrong, but that was always the impression I had.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 1:02pm

I read somewhere that one of the things the writers had to keep reminding themselves when writing the Spock character is to keep toning him down, and not let him get all wise-assed or crazy emotional every other episode for one reason or another. Sort of the same way the people who write "House" have to keep his snark level up and not keep giving him so many heart moments that it dilutes the character.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 1:19pm

Dear Unregistered Nickname-

See attached,

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

Your pal,

John B.

[Reply](#)

- [twif](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 2:04pm

all vulcans have emotions. they just repress them. and spock is half-human too, which was always played up as internal conflict.

i'm not much of a trekkie, but i thought the whole "vulcans were bloody violent and nearly destroyed themselves till they learned to surpress their emotions via logic" thing was well known to even casual fans. nearly every vulcan in every incarnation of star trek fucks up the whole surpression of emotion thing at least once.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 2:37pm

Yeah. All Vulcans suppress their emotions. Except for all of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Chancellor Puddinghead](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 3:26pm

@John B:

I like mine better. If they don't make that change immediately, then the Romulans have already won.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 3:54pm

I \*hate\* "Miri". Hate it, hate it, hate it.

[Reply](#)

- [boson](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 6:31pm

You must be a grup

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 6:33pm

Bonk bonk on the head.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [hem](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/23/09 8:09pm

It's an AV Club Watermark

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/24/09 10:03am

More Rand love in "Miri:" "Look at my legs now, Captain. Look at them now!!!"

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 12:56pm

Guest Characters Who are More Interesting than the Regulars

Star Trek always had problems with guest characters that were involved in much more active/nefarious stuff than the regular cast. After all, while there is some fighting and ogling hot alien babe (Star Trek's sexual attitudes were always on the prudish, voyeuristic side), the Enterprise folks are generally there to do either scientific stuff, or act as a kind of space police. Either way, they're on the side of goodness and order, which tends to make them a bit dull.

There's an episode early on in Star Trek: The Next Generation where the crew crosses paths with a kind of swashbuckling space pirate of sorts, and it become immediately and painfully apparent just how dull and goody-goody the Enterprise people are.

I always thought it would be interesting to have a Star Trek series that didn't focus on the Navy-like Starfleet, but rather take place in the Star Trek universe and focus on people aren't in Starfleet, who have normal adult sexual issues, and are involved in (I guess) less sci-fi and more human drama. Battlestar Gallactica does a little of this, when it's not beating everyone over the head with politics and religion.

[Reply](#)

- [Mclovin](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 1:25pm

I think that was part of the idea for Deep Space 9, though it went in other directions pretty quickly

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 1:38pm

And talk about DS9 beating you over the head with politics and religion...

[Reply](#)

- [Benjamin\\_Barker](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 9:15pm

I don't think Mudd is more interesting than Kirk or Spock. But I certainly agree regarding TNG (which may have been your first Trek?). Bunch of bloodless bureaucrats, that crew. I think I read this in a Ron Moore interview (he was a TNG/DS9 writer): that with TNG Roddenberry was pushing his paradisaical, conflict-free vision of Federation-era Earth much harder than he was able or willing to in the original show. It's a lovely sentiment but not the best background for an exciting program. You can see it in the characters, among other things. They are all just so well-adjusted and - behaved that the drama is often non-existent, so just about any good stuff required big, big villains. Yeah, I'm an anti-TNG partisan; thanks for the opening. Looks like the Adm. above said some of this but I wanted to say that I don't think TOS should be lumped in on this. It's really TNG's problem.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 9:26pm

And Firefly really IS "Wagon Train in Space".

Man, that was a great show.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 11:15pm

I thought the original idea of DS9 was that these were the fuckups of the Federation, sent to the asshole of the universe where nothing really works. But they dropped that pretty fast too.

The Anti-TNG was Babylon 5.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Gentle Herpes

1/23/09 11:15pm

I thought the original idea of DS9 was that these were the fuckups of the Federation, sent to the asshole of the universe where nothing really works. But they dropped that pretty fast too.

The Anti-TNG was Babylon 5.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Gentle Herpes

1/24/09 6:48am

The Next Gen was like the Merchant/Ivory of Star Trek productions. Classy.  
(next gen remains my fav trek tho as it was the first—also for what its worth i do believe next gen to be the most accessible and mainstream trek series for non trek fans. there's a seriousness to the ideas that's always there....for better or worse.)

I liked DS9 a lot and think the turns it took over the years only made it get better and better if not livelier and more alive. Those first 2 years were kind of staid and boring no?

Voyager sucked so much tho...so so much..and i've seen every ep too.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gentle Herpes

1/24/09 11:28am

DS9 never got interesting until the last few seasons' story arc with the Cardassian war etc. Even if they killed off good Dax for no damn good reason.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gentle Herpes

1/24/09 5:14pm

That splains it, thanks for the info. Been blaming the producers all along. She sure has fallen off the map, too bad.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Gentle Herpes

1/24/09 11:18pm

Last I saw she was in that Ted Dansen Medicine Man tv show.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 12:33pm

Good Kirk sucked too

A lot of these episodes of Star Trek would toss in some really interesting ideas. I always really liked how good kirk, rather than being just like regular kirk, was a terrible captain. I wish they explored those ideas more, because the episode devolved into evil kirk making crazy face at the camera.

[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)Henry

1/23/09 12:43pm

yup, it adds a huge amount of depth and emotional awareness for them to suggest that a lot of the daring and bravery kirk displays (things we think of as good qualities) actually stem from something which, unchecked, is negative. decent people learn how to appropriately balance these sorts of things. it's exactly this sort of thing that non-fans don't understand when they insinuate tos is nothing more than green alien sex and hammy acting.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Henry

1/23/09 11:11pm

There was no Evil Kirk, just Bad Motherfucker Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Henry

1/23/09 11:11pm

There was no Evil Kirk, just Bad Motherfucker Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Henry

1/24/09 6:42am

tis a good concept/idea. and it was served up in a nice shiny package that made room for overacting as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Henry

1/24/09 2:41pm

You mean darker eye-liner Kirk. Regular Kirk was pretty tarted up as well.

I like how they shot close-ups of his face in fuzzy-vision.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [AntiSocialite](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 1:21pm

X-Files classic TV Club?

Hey Zack, will you be doing any write ups for season 2 and beyond?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)AntiSocialite

1/23/09 1:24pm

I don't know if the recaps were popular enough to justify a return, but if it does come back, it won't be till summer at the earliest.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)AntiSocialite

1/23/09 2:44pm

Well if you can't do the entire series, one hopes you could find time for some of the more iconic episodes at least.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)AntiSocialite

1/23/09 3:10pm

Brain? What is brain?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)AntiSocialite

1/24/09 6:51am

I just wanna see his take on Kirk being inhabited by the spirit of a woman he scorned.

also ALL MY YESTERDAYS which is the 2nd to last ep is the best ep they ever made. well i think at least.

[Reply](#)

- [Hear God Laugh](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 11:14am

True Story

In 1982 I went to middle school with a chick who claimed that the actor who played Mudd was her estranged father. She was kind of weird & the type of chick who would make something up to seem more interesting but that was so random I always assumed it was true.

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Name](#)Hear God Laugh

1/23/09 9:59pm

He was also Colonel Gumm ,who fought not only Batman, but the Green Hornet. Which means that he battled both tubby sixties icons with a weird rhythm to their speech, Shatner and West, plus Bruce Lee too.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Hear God Laugh

1/23/09 11:02pm

"I,Mudd" was always my favorite episode. Carmel's death hurt me more than DeForest Kelly's. Carmel woulda been perfect as Q.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Hear God Laugh

1/23/09 11:02pm

"I,Mudd" was always my favorite episode. Carmel's death hurt me more than DeForest Kelly's. Carmel woulda been perfect as Q.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 2:04pm

Bifurcated Space Dog

I had all of their albums in the 1970s.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)barefoot jim

1/23/09 2:16pm

I've got "Just Because It's Called The Milky Way," but I was never much interested in the later stuff. It's like, once they started doing drugs, they actually became \_less\_ interesting; and what's with "The Cats We May Have Killed"? Two hours of spoken word Lithuanian poetry may get you points for research, but not much else.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)barefoot jim

1/24/09 6:53am

I believe The Cats We May Have Killed was titled that because the lead singer was hung up on ALF at the time.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

1/27/09 4:48am

Strange anecdote:

I live in France and my ex-wife had a cat called 'Alf' after the TV show...

It wasn't until years later that she realized that everyone that it was called 'Half' because no one pronounces 'h's here...

They chalked it up to her being and AAnglophile (and lucky for me, big on Americans)...

[Reply](#)

- [MarkOC](#)Zack Handlen

1/27/09 1:01pm

the "funny" character problem

Having had some experience writing for (and pitching to) the newer ST series, I have a real appreciation for the writing on TOS. Not only did Gene Roddenberry have the wisdom to hire some of the best science fiction writers of the day to write TOS episodes (even if he did then re-write them), he also gave each of the regular characters enough shading (sometimes just enough) that any one of them could, if called upon, deliver a moment of humor, sometimes a whole scene's worth, to the proceedings. On TNG and DS9, you could not, COULD NOT, give certain characters funny lines or moments, which to me are the moments that breathe life into a character. So, I would try to slip in a funny moment for Sisko, and I would be told, "Sisko would never do that. That's what Quark is for." That was the template for every series from TNG on: seven main characters; six of them bland, one of them funny, no exceptions. On TNG, Data got the laugh lines, on Voyager it was the kooky doctor, and on Enterprise it was, uh... okay, my thesis breaks down with Enterprise. Anyway, there's always a way to cheat the system: my proudest accomplishment was that I actually got a comedy episode made on DS9, but it took some doing, because the story revolved around a character who wasn't even there: Morn.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MarkOC

1/27/09 2:59pm

Very interesting. I must admit that most of my idea of writing for ST comes from the Gerrold book, which actually got me into writing and thence directing.

What was the name of your episode? I'd love to see it (I've only seen a couple of seasons of DS9.)

[Reply](#)

- [anaphysik](#)Richelieu Jr

11/17/16 6:27am

8 years late, but for future readers also interested: the episode in question is almost certainly "Who Mourns for Morn?", credited to Mark Gehred-O'Connell (which matches 'MarkOC'). Mark is also credited for DS9 episodes "Second Sight", "Meridian", and "For the Cause", and gave the initial pitch for the TNG episode "Timescape" (but did not script it).

(Edit: and I should have read further down. Darn double-posts, splitting threads...)

[Reply](#)

- [VHS Jockey](#)Zack Handlen

1/31/09 12:57am

5G

Johnny Farrell is goony looking. He reminds me of Adam Whitman.

[Reply](#)

- [goat](#)VHS Jockey

9/04/12 11:51am

More like Don Knotts.

[Reply](#)

- [MarkOC](#)Zack Handlen

1/27/09 1:02pm

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[Reply](#)

- [Dr.Robuttnik](#)Zack Handlen

6/10/13 8:44pm

I always loved the Ren and Stimpy spoof on this episode. Ren pours some chemical on him that splits him into his two most basic halves: Evil Ren and Apathetic Ren. I never got the joke about the split (besides the writers clearly having fun with the randomness of "apathy" and breaking out the thesaurus by calling him "Indifferent" and "Dispassionate" Ren). But watching how anemic Good Kirk was in my later years kind of sold it for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Finocchiaro](#)Zack Handlen

6/04/15 6:27am

Am I the only one that is bothered that after EK melts a column that is critical to the transporter (having intended to kill wussy Kirk), Scotty says he needs a week to repair it. But after the commercial break (with Sulu freezing below and wussy Kirk hanging up on him), the transporter is used and kills unicorn poodle creature. WTF?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

1/27/09 4:52am

New Format

Hey Zack,

Just a word to say this was a great job, insightful, funny and complete-feeling. The two-episode format is much better and plays to your strengths.

I hadn't watched these episodes before reading and I think I'll do so now!

Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [sputnik7](#)Zack Handlen

9/16/11 10:41pm

Note the scene approximately 30 minutes into "Mudd's Women" where Farrell and Magda are walking down a corridor. Is this the first on screen demonstration of exchanging digits?

[Reply](#)

- [ncyankee](#)Zack Handlen

3/05/13 11:58am

How about that nifty piece of cinematography where Eve's hand holding the Venus drug cuts right to Spock's hand holding the burned-out (di)lithium crystal.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Zack Handlen

1/24/09 6:55am

these really were 2 solid eps of the original series.

will we get 2 consecutive eps of this quality in a row like this again? SUSPENSE!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 6:07am

Whereas "Time" was about the whole crew succumbing to their basest desires,

Yeah. It was about nothing of the sort.

[Reply](#)

- [Tyrannorabbit](#)Zack Handlen

2/14/12 12:13am

You know what I liked about Mudd's Women? Mudd's mug shot. He's still wearing the same shirt!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [freaktown](#)Zack Handlen

7/20/14 4:36pm



when both kirks were on the bridge, the scratches on evil kirk were on the wrong side of his face.

[Reply](#)

- [Tyrannorabbit](#)Zack Handlen

2/14/12 12:21am

I also liked the eyeliner on Evil Kirk. Holy shit, eyeliner is Kirk's Spock's Beard.

[Reply](#)

- [sputnik7](#)Zack Handlen

9/16/11 12:42am

Dude, how creepy was Shatner's performance as 'Evil Kirk' in "The Enemy Within?"

[Reply](#)

- [Djoneson](#)Zack Handlen

12/30/12 4:00pm

So "The Enemy Within" works pretty well as an exploration of alcoholism.

[Reply](#)

- [TheRealBrundleFly](#)Zack Handlen

1/23/09 6:44pm

You are much better at this...

...then that fat fuck Devin Faraci.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "What Are Little Girls Made Of?"/"Miri"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 6, 2009

[Comments \(90\)](#)



When writing two episodes up at a time, it's tempting to try and find some kind of connective tissue to link them together; something a bit more complex than simply, "Gosh, that Enterprise sure has some wacky adventures, don't it?" I think it's the English Lit student in me—anything more than four paragraphs long must be an essay, and an essay simply must have a theme. (The joke being, as English students go, I was the don't-read-the-book-and-write-the-paper-three-hours-before-it's-due type. If only Professor Flesch could see me now.) There's a danger in connectivity, though. It's possible to see patterns in everything, and clever as those patterns may be, if you get too hung up on one of them, you're going to start missing the big picture.

That said, "What Are Little Girls Made Of?" and "Miri" do have at least one thing in common beyond the obvious, and that one thing is something we haven't really gotten into yet: the manly mojo of Captain Kirk. Awww yeah.

Most of the longest running *Trek* jokes revolve around Kirk and his lust for alien ladies (anybody know any? Feel free to share below), enough so that newcomers to the series might be a little surprised to see just how tame James T. actually is. Far from running cross the galaxy to screw anything that moves, Kirk is a romantic whose deep sense of responsibility and love for his ship keep him flirty but steadfast. (A moment's gratitude here that the holodeck had yet to be invented; imagine the horrors had Kirk been allowed to consummate the great romance of his life...) No, the real secret behind the legendary libido isn't the way a scantily-clad, tentacle-free hotty catches the Captain's eye; it's more his supposed effect on every female he encounters. For the women of the *Trek*-verse, to see Kirk is to go all squishy inside—and as one poor android discovers, that sort of thing gets dangerous when your internals were outsourced to Radio Shack.

Going in to this week's outing, I had certain expectations: I knew there was a hot robo-chick in "Little Girls," and I knew the ep also had Ted Cassidy wandering around in what looked like a bed comforter and that muumuu Homer wore on *The Simpsons*. I also knew that "Miri" had the extreme awkwardness of watching Shatner put the movies on a barely teenage girl. I figured "Little Girls" had the edge. As is proving to be sort of a habit for me, I was actually off on my estimations; I had the facts right, for sure, but something was missing in the details.

Guess what? It turns out Nurse Christine Chapel actually has a back-story, if you can believe it. She gave up her own career and joined Starfleet when her fiancée, Dr. Roger Korby, disappeared five years ago. So she's a little anxious now that the Enterprise is orbiting Exo III, the source of Korby's last known message. Expectations on the bridge aren't high, seeing as how Exo III has a surface temperature of 100 degrees below zero; without off-planet supplies, it's difficult to see how Korby could've managed to survive in such harsh conditions for a month, let alone 60 of them.

And yet, survive he apparently has; just when Uhura is about to give up her radio badgering, Korby sends up a message that he's a.) still alive, and b.) wants Kirk to beam down to the planet for a meet-and-greet. Thing is, he wants Kirk to come down *alone*. While he changes his tune once he finds out that Chapel's around, it's still a highly suspicious request, even with Kirk's regular participation in landing parties. Plus, there's the never-a-good sign, "I have this really cool thing that only you can see, and I can't explain what it is on open channels, but you gotta come see it, and I'm totally not going to kill you, promise!" add-on. It's not enough to keep Kirk away, naturally, but at least his Captain-sense is tingling.

What we've got here is the standard mad scientist set-up: Korby is meddling in things that Man Was Not Meant To Meddle With, including hot android slaves and immortality, and he's so convinced that he's doing good that he's determined to bring joy to the rest of the universe. Still, he's not a complete idiot; he realizes that transferring everyone's consciousness into a robot duplicate may be a bit of a hard sell, so Step 1 is to convince Kirk to hear the news and that the news is good. Step 2 is a bit fuzzy—something to do with mass construction of the equipment and spin-booths set up in every Hot Topic in the known universe (hey, being a robot is *sort* of like being a vampire, right?). Step 3, profit, or at least some sort of Mecha-Hands Across America variant thereof.

All of which leads to a lot of conversation on what makes a human "human." Not surprisingly, it all boils down to feeeeeeelings, which is one of the reasons Mr. Spock is relegated to bridge duty while Kirk goes emoting planet-side. "Little Girls" never really gets off the ground in its man/machine debates, but it has its share of iconic imagery. Not all of that's good, though; the sight of Andrea, Korby's android assistant, wandering around in coveralls that just barely cover enough probably ushered a good number of young sci-fi boys (and girls) into the embarrassing halls of adulthood, but while Ted Cassidy makes for a formidable physical threat, his outfit is just embarrassing. It looks like a left over costume from *Big Momma's House 3: Dumpster Divin'*.

Still, Cassidy himself is impressive, and he does manage to get the jump on Kirk what seems like half-a-dozen times over the course of the episode. But that's one of the problems; once Kirk and Chapel meet Korby and discover what's going on, things quickly settle into a rut of Kirk and Korby arguing philosophy, Kirk making a break for it, Ruk (aka Cassidy) catching him, and the cycle starting all over again. We learn that Korby is using technology left behind by the Old Ones, who were aiming for immortality but managed to obsolete themselves out of existence when they created robot servants who couldn't tolerate the weakness emotions bring. And we also learn that Korby can make robot copies of a person, using a spinning wheel that fits a blank slug on the one side and the naked original on the other. Of course Korby just has to make a copy of Kirk; there's a clever bit here where Kirk sends a message to Spock through the copy, using the term "half-breed" to clue Spock in to the whole duplicate mix-up.

"Little Girls" isn't bad, but it does come off as too circular at times, and the big secrets aren't all that impressive. The arguments about human nature seem less about arguing and more about killing time between commercial breaks. (Robert Bloch, the writer behind the ep, has solid chops when it comes to pulp—he wrote the novel *Psycho* is based on—but he was never a philosophical heavyweight.) Given the repetitive plotting, there's no real sense of danger here, either to Chapel and Kirk or to the Enterprise herself; and without that danger, the threat is never all that, well, threatening. Kirk in isolation just isn't as interesting as when he's playing off a strong presence like Spock or McCoy, and Chapel is less a foil than a mannequin who sometimes says, "Roger" and always looks worried. Plus, there's the Kirk machismo moment—in order to defeat Andrea, he seduces her, leading her to inadvertently murder his duplicate and drive Korby to off himself. It doesn't make a lick of sense, really. Apparently, the heat Shatner puts out is powerful enough to defeat circuitry *and* common sense.

But thank god he's got it, or how else would he get a 300 year old teenager to do his bidding? "Miri" is a lot stronger than I remembered it; it's got a solid hook (a world run by near immortality children), some great guest stars (Michael J. Pollard! Kim Darby! That kid who played Dill in *To Kill A Mockingbird!*), and that sense of imminent danger that "Little Girls" so sorely lacked. But you ask most *Trek* fans about the episode, and they're going to remember one thing,

and one thing only: Kirk's relationship with the "almost-a-woman" Miri, and the way that relationship keeps threatening to go from sweet to Humbert Humbert every couple scenes.

In what would become a regular theme of *TOS* (and by "theme" I mean "budget saving device"), the Enterprise finds a planet in an unexplored solar system that bears a remarkable resemblance to Earth. Not only is the atmosphere the right mix for human life (weird that they'd mention that, seeing as how it never comes up on any of the other alien planets they visit), and the continents structured suspiciously familiar to our own—almost like the effects department just filmed a standard globe without bothering to layer on atmosphere—when Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Rand, and a pair of red-shirts beam down, they find a deserted city with architecture that, wonder of wonders, could've stepped right off a TV studio backlot. (Spock pinpoints it as Earth's "1960's", which seems off; was the local stable a typical in-town feature during the Kennedy years?)

This is lazy world-building to be sure, and the coincidence, once raised, is quickly forgotten; the landing party soon has other, more pressing concerns. Still, the "Earth, through a glass darkly" set-up gives you a sense early on that things aren't quite right—that something happened (and event, maybe?) centuries ago that completely arrested the social and technological development of an entire world. So while it's a shock when the first inhabitant of Never Never Land jumps out of the shadows, a lurching, leprous hulk that moans like a toddler over a lost toy, it's not exactly a surprise to discover that inhabitant isn't a fluke. Here on the Island of Misfit Boys (and Girls), being a kid is the best thing ever. Unfortunately, it's also the *only* thing.

Like Korby's Old Ones, the former "grups" of Miri's World were obsessed with immortality, with equally disastrous results. While the Old Ones were undone by their robot slaves, the grups (aka, "grown-ups") created a virus intended to keep them alive forever; only it backfired, as such things do. Now, pre-pubescent kids only age a month for every hundred years that pass, but once one of those kids starts growing hair in the wasn't-there-before spots, they're doomed to die a disfiguring, horrible death. In one of the script's smarter twists, this leaves a planet full of semi-immortals who are still operating on that part of the brain that thinks glitter glue, the *Twilight* novels, and Miley Cyrus are all really good ideas. Logically, I'm not sure this follows; you'd think after 300 years banging around town, there'd have to be at least some sense of causality and logic. But as a story-driver, it's top-notch. For anyone who's ever tried to explain anything to a seven year-old who didn't want to hear it, the scene with Kirk desperately making his case to Pollard and his merry band of munchkins rings very, very true.

So we've got our premise—a decaying city filled with yesterday's children. The threat comes from the virus that those naughty grups left lying around: it's still active planet-side, and it inevitably effects the human members of the landing party, starting with Kirk and working its way on down. They can't go back to the ship (Spock is disease-free, but it's almost certain he's a carrier at this point), so McCoy sets to work finding a cure for what ails them in what looks like an abandoned high school chem lab. This becomes increasingly difficult as time wears on, as the virus works on everyone's nerves in addition to giving them ugly purple splotches all over; soon Kirk and McCoy are yelling at each other like an old married couple, and not even Spock's detachment can speed the slow crawl of Science. And it doesn't help matters that one group of "onlies" (as the kids call themselves) isn't too happy with the sudden adult influx, and starts making moves to take care of the problem.

Lazy as the "wow, it's just like Earth!" opening may be, "Miri" is a strong ep; it sets a specific deadline for our heroes, and keeps the pressure on till the very end. (There's a nice scene between Rand and Kirk when she shows him how much the disease has taken out of her; the sad way she says, "I used to try and get you to look at my legs," is surprisingly moving.) If there's one thing I've learned doing these recaps, it's that *TOS* episodes live and die on how well they convey a sense of urgency. "Little Girls" suffers because, pastel-covered Cassidy aside, the danger is never that immediate. As villains go, Korby is too much of a puss to be a problem, and Ruk only bumps off a couple of red-shirts. In "Miri," though, we're reminded again and again what's at stake, and while there's never any real sense that the crew could die (hell, both red-shirts make it through unscathed, including that guy with the awful comb-over who's been with us a couple episodes now), *they* don't know that.

But there is that weird relationship between Kirk and Miri, the Enterprise's only link to the planet's current inhabitants. Much is made about how Miri is on the "cusp of womanhood," which means she inevitably gets a crush on Kirk; and Kirk, like any sensible person would, exploits that crush in order to protect his crew. There's nothing inherently wrong with this. The problem is, Shatner isn't a good enough actor to convey the difference between buttering up a fourteen

year-old, and putting the moves on that tipsy twenty-something at the other end of the bar who's one Sex On The Beach away from stumbling back to your hotel room and falling asleep on the floor. Plus, there's the *way* he exploits her; using her to make contact with the other kids makes sense, but treating her like a temp from the steno pool is a little much. The smug look on his face when he asks her to sharpen just a few more pencils is hilarious and infuriating in equal measure.

I guess that's Kirk all over, really.

#### Grades:

"What Are Little Girls Made Of?": B+

"Miri": A-

#### Stray Observations:

—"Little Girls" marks the first time that Kirk uses racial insults to get through to Spock. I loved how Shatner plays the scene, with robot-Kirk raging for one line, and then going right back to polite apathy.

—The Kirk roll in "Little Girls" made me want to watch *Galaxy Quest* again.

—Next week, "Dagger Of The Mind" and "The Corbomite Maneuver."

—Bonk-bonk!

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (89)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 11:53am

Well . . .

"Spock pinpoints it as Earth's "1960's", which seems off; was the local stable a typical in-town feature during the Kennedy years?"

Well, he IS an alien. And really, what's the difference between 1900 and 1960 in a 200-year-old Vulcan's eyes?

/pretending Vulcans and TV writers share firm belief in logic

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 12:38pm

Spock should stick to Vulcan history. We humans are sick of his half-breed interference.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 12:38pm

Spock should stick to Vulcan history. We humans are sick of his half-breed interference.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 12:57pm

It's the Earth 1960s, captain. Some kind of... studio backlot.

[Reply](#)

- [Benjamin\\_Barker](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 1:13pm

Well I guess it all blurs together as just "ancient" history to them, if its not their fancy outer-space era. It's a pet peeve of mine that they call 20th-century culture ancient. It's like if we called the 18th century "ancient." And as a non-outer-space-era person, I always felt a little insulted, especially as it's usually coming from a afraid-of-transporters down-to-earth Bones when he's complain about medical tech.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 2:09pm

Zach may have gotten that wrong; as I remember it, the planet wasn't just \*similar\* to earth (like many other planets the crew visits), but as they explained it, it was an \*exact replica\* of earth from the '60s.

Which is weird because not only does that factor go unexplained, it's completely forgotten after it's brought up.

That always bugged me about this episode, which I thought was pretty weak. The one with the hot android was a lot more entertaining in my op.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 2:11pm

I love the thing where they would enumerate noteworthy people of the past, and it would always be two real people and one crazy future person. Like

"Ah yes, classic, like the music of Mozart, Beethoven, and Zontar of Zeta Cygna B."

"The great playwrights: Shakespeare, Ibsen, and Chavandinon of Patton Rigel 9."

"Like the worst murderers in history: Hitler, Stalin, and Mordander of Exicron Fillip Deuce."

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [wookie](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 2:37pm

I like that people call their own planets by the star and the number from the star. "Where are you from?" "Sol 3"

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 3:10pm

partdavid — On that note, there's an episode of TNG where Matt Frewer's character says something to the effect of, "Several great artists were blind: Homer. Bach. Wonder."

Of course \*spoiler\* he wasn't really from the future, but I liked the contemporary reference.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 4:12pm

I first saw that episode comparatively recently, I can't believe I missed it the first time; I loved it. I <3 Matt Frewer something horrible. I even watched Doctor, Doctor religiously. Now there's a TV series no one is clamoring for on DVD.

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/06/09 7:34pm

I saw Monty Python's "The Meaning of Life" for the first time recently, which has Matt Frewer in one of his first roles. It's almost ironic; he was chosen because he was an unknown actor who fit the type (that is, he could play a nameless businessman who had enough similar features to Graham Chapman that they could be considered indistinguishable parts of the Very Big Corporation of America). Yet for me, watching the movie years after he'd become better known, he WASN'T an indistinguishable corporate cog because I recognized him.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/07/09 5:31am

Don't be too sure about that PartDavid

Dididididididi Doctor Doctor

Dididididididi Doctor Doctor

Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, Yeah

Is There A Doctor in The House?

Yeeeeeeeeeeeeessssssssss!

starring Matt Frewer and Julius Carry the Third (he was Sho'Nuff!!!)

I watched every one when USA was rerunning them back in 2000/2001. oh i wish they would rerun more old short lived sitcoms.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/07/09 9:57pm

We're whalers on the moon

We carry a harpoon

For they ain't no whales

So we tell tall tales

And sing our whaling tune

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/07/09 9:59pm

I still have a video tape of Doctor Doctor from its original run on CBS. Matt Frewer is way undervalued.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [El Zilcho](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 11:11am

I said it last week

But "Miri" creeps me out.

The Corbomite Maneuver is a favorite, though. Clint Howard!

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 11:37am

When I was a kid and first saw "Miri", the whole jailbait issue went right over my head. I remember this episode vividly for what Zack mentioned, that sense of impending doom as their time ran out.

Also, I now realize how long it's been since I've watched this series. I had no recollection of anything in "What Are Little Girls Made Of" as I was rewatching it last night. I'm really looking forward to rewatching this series again, even the crappy episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 12:33pm

To Kirk's credit, he's not really putting the moves on Miri. He knows she has a crush on him, and uses that to get her to cooperate. Kirk's all about the Rand, and that's what eventually pisses Miri off.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 12:33pm

To Kirk's credit, he's not really putting the moves on Miri. He knows she has a crush on him, and uses that to get her to cooperate. Kirk's all about the Rand, and that's what eventually pisses Miri off.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 2:06pm

I think too much is being made of the jailbait thing. The girl obviously falls in love with Kirk, but aside from a few creepy smiles, it's not like he takes advantage or anything. It's natural for a pre-teen girl to have a crush on an older authority figure like that.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 2:17pm

The reason there are so many Earth-like planets around is because of the "Providers." They're the ones who created the first, long-gone Galactic Federation, and seeded all kinds of planets with human and humanoid life forms.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 3:15pm

It's so bizarre, I was thinking about that TNG episode as well while I was watching this episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Benjamin\\_Barker](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 3:23pm

But did they seed the universe with continents shaped just like those of Earth? Thank goodness for those precursors, they really helped keep the budget down.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)El Zilcho

2/06/09 3:34pm

I think that was answered in "Hitchhiker's Guide," where they have to reboot Earth using the backup.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)El Zilcho

2/07/09 5:27am

ironically that scene cost a fortune.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)El Zilcho

2/07/09 9:48pm

I have yet to rewatch this one, but it never felt that creepy to me, especially because Miri didn't really look 13.

scotteb:



Certain episodes seemed to get repeated less than others. Little Girls seemed to come up less often, as did Catspaw. Over years of watching, I can only remember catching each twice. No idea why, though.

Benjamin\_Barker:

No, that is because of the Magratheans. Just look for the fjords.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)El Zilcho

2/11/09 1:23pm

@Will You Marry Me

When that episode of NextGen aired, I was astounded. That all the races in the 'Verse came from a common ancestor, to me, is possibly the single most mind-blowing concept ever produced by Star Trek.

I was hoping for, though not expecting, massive cultural upheaval among the various warring factions.

Some questions are still unanswered.

Did the Precursors expect that the child-races would have to work together to make the discovery?

Does the discovery quicken the pace of interstellar peace efforts?

What about religions? ST never made much ado about religion until DS9 came about. But I've wondered how the news affected the devout.

Fucking Brannon Braga!

They made this historic, mind-numbingly startling discovery about the nature of humanoid development and prehistory. And the next week they forgot all about it. And never mentioned it again.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [DCRJ](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 2:03pm

Kirk charisma aside...

I'd take the emotionally suppressed half-breed any day of the week. Yowza!

I'd also like to second the Futurama Trek ep love. The pre-ripped shirt; the fan fiction; Kirk and Lela making out instead of fighting. Best. Trek parody. Ever.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)DCRJ

2/06/09 3:18pm

Best half hour Trek parody. I still think Galaxy Quest was better, but that's probably because they had more time to develop the jokes.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)DCRJ

2/06/09 8:51pm

I stand corrected.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)DCRJ

2/06/09 8:51pm

I stand corrected.

[Reply](#)

- [El Crab](#)DCRJ

2/06/09 11:37pm

So you stood corrected. And then again. So does that mean you're back to where you originally stood?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)DCRJ

2/07/09 5:35am

He's corrected counter-clockwise

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)DCRJ

2/07/09 10:22am

I am a she.

For some reason when I post on my Mac at home, it always double posts, but when I post from work on my PC, no problem. Another glitch of the reboot?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)DCRJ

2/16/09 3:51am

Interesting. I too am a victim of occasional mac-only double posts...

And I am a he.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [George Liquor](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 12:47pm

LURCH! IN! SPAAAAACE!

Ted Cassidy was a bit of a series regular. We got him coming up next week, too!

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 1:15pm

And he was the voice of the Gorn captain. I also loved his bit part in 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid'.

"Rules?! In a knife fight?!!"

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 3:34pm

Lurch: Uuuugghhhhhh....

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 7:36pm

And of course later Nurse Chappel's manservant Mr. Homm, and the Giant on Twin Peaks.

"There is...a man in a smiling bag."

[Reply](#)

- [bk](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 11:56pm

Hey I thought James Doohan was the voice of the Gorn captain. Doohan was supposedly the go-to guy for all-knowing computer/alien voices (if they were male)... What other Canadian could pretend to be Scots, I ask ye?

mmm... Nova Scotia Lox

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)George Liquor

2/07/09 12:04am

According to IMDB (which is always, ALWAYS right) it was an uncredited Ted Cassidy. And it does pretty much sound like him. Except for the hissing.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)George Liquor

2/07/09 5:33am

hmmm Ted Cassidy ey?

[Reply](#)

- [TreeRoI](#)Bob K

11/25/21 4:08am

No way! When I saw Lurch I was like "Oh hello Mr. Homm." I had no idea it actually was him!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Captain Caveman](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 11:29am

70s boobs

I'm just saying 70s boobs were different.

[Reply](#)

- [Fighter Hayabusa](#)Captain Caveman

2/06/09 12:14pm

And pubic hair ran in long tracts as far as the eyes could see...

[Reply](#)

- [LazarouMonkeyTerror](#)Captain Caveman

2/06/09 6:27pm

back when boobs were real boobs and men smoking cigarettes like kings!

[Reply](#)

- [Darth Weevil](#)Captain Caveman

2/06/09 7:11pm

...and small furry creatures from Alpha Centauri were real small furry creatures from Alpha Centauri.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Captain Caveman

2/07/09 5:27am

and a royal fizzbin was actually worth a damn fine amount!

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Captain Caveman

2/07/09 9:53pm

Space, is big. Really big. You just won't believe how vastly hugely mindbogglingly big it is. I mean you may think it's a long way down the road to the chemist, but that's just peanuts to space.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)Captain Caveman

2/11/09 1:23pm

60's

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [FortyTwo](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 2:54pm

South Park

My husband isn't as well-versed in Trek as I am, so he didn't realize that South Park's "Wacky Molestation Adventure" makes a ton of references to "Miri." They even used electric bass for the dramatic music in that episode.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

2/06/09 8:52pm

Yeah, you'd have to see the episode to get the references, but it's obvious if you're a Trek fan.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

2/06/09 8:52pm

Yeah, you'd have to see the episode to get the references, but it's obvious if you're a Trek fan.

[Reply](#)

- [El Crab](#)FortyTwo

2/06/09 11:38pm

I still, to this day, see Wacky Mole Station Adventure when I see that episode's title. I was confused for quite awhile watching it, too.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)FortyTwo

2/07/09 5:36am

that's just wacky man

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)FortyTwo

2/07/09 10:06pm

And don't forget the Trek parodies in Spooky Fish and Flashback.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Captain January](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 4:17pm

No More Blah-Blah-Blah!

Very early in the development of Star Trek, Gene Roddenberry and his collaborators came up with the idea that part of the Enterprise's mission would involve landing only on planets of Earth-Mars condition, creating the concept of "Class M" planets. This was done for obvious budgetary/production reasons but it did hold the series together in what Zack describes as a thematic way and allows for a kind of internal sense — even if a few of those M-class planets look made out of papier mache and potted plants; Trek always looked better when they could shoot exteriors on location.

They also developed early on a "parallel worlds" concept, meaning the Enterprise would regularly come across strange, new worlds and new civilizations that bore some funhouse resemblance to Earth history — a planet reminiscent of ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, the Old West, World war II Germany, etc. (Again, as a practical production solution

as well as an organizing, storytelling principle that would be cohesive.) The idea got tweaked and changed around as the series progressed by that basic idea can be found through a number of produced episodes.

But as for the duplicate Earth in Miri? After some thirty+ years of watching and rewatching this series, I have never found or come up with an explanation for that, particularly as that Amazing Coincidence (even in the experience of the Boldly Going crew of the Enterprise) is so quickly dropped and never mentioned again.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)Captain January

2/06/09 5:02pm

E plagnista.

[Reply](#)

- [bk](#)Captain January

2/07/09 12:03am

Futurama: "Nazi-planet-episode Land; formerly Germany."

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Captain January

2/07/09 5:38am

they should've just showed that episode in history class when covering world war 2.

[Reply](#)

- [SlackerInc](#)Captain January

11/29/14 5:35am

Did they also plan early on that it would be a regular thing for the top-billed cast to have to stretch themselves, Orphan Black style, playing altered versions of themselves? I count five of the first seven episodes in which at least one of the main actors has to play either an imposter, or his character is possessed by some force or illness that causes him to act bizarrely.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 1:20pm

Dollhouse

Speaking of hot robot chicks...

Sorry to freeload on your Star Trek post, Zack, but will you be writing up 'Dollhouse' next week? I mean, naked Eliza Dushku robot in a group shower!

I don't see how you can \_not\_ write that up.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Breakfast Balls

2/06/09 1:46pm

Scott's got that one, actually. (I'll be busy covering the not-really-naked-but-she-wins-by-a-mile Summer Glau when Terminator comes back.)

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Breakfast Balls

2/07/09 12:08am

Yeah, I saw that ad a couple of days ago. I have no idea what relation that style has to the actual show and it seems kind of a day late and a dollar short to jump on that particular bandwagon, but it was a cool ad nonetheless.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Breakfast Balls

2/07/09 5:35am

the fact that you agree it was cool means it did its job.

they're two sci fi shows on Friday nights on FOX...they need every little bit of help (and prayer) they can get!

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 12:15pm

Professor Flesch

Now that's a damn fine porn name!

[Reply](#)

- [Manic Eightball](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 12:38pm

That part made me laugh because the don't-read-the-book-and-write-the-paper-three-hours-before-it's-due type is the type of Lit major I currently am. Glad to keep the traditions alive.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)George Liquor

2/06/09 12:48pm

Zack, did you do any "extra credit" in Professor Flesch's class?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)George Liquor

2/07/09 5:32am

its too bad you didn't have professor fletch. You could've bullshitted the entire syllabus away!

[Reply](#)

- [Sugar Tits](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 3:52pm

Is it just me...

..or did Roger Korby seem a bit GAY? I mean, what did he and Christine have going on, anyway?

[Reply](#)

- [bk](#)Sugar Tits

2/07/09 12:00am

And maybe he just needs a GIANT MALE ROBOT for, you know, fixin' stuff.

And he designs female clothes like Cher's... just because?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Sugar Tits

2/07/09 5:38am

that machine is just FABULOUS!

[Reply](#)

- [Sugar Tits](#)Sugar Tits

2/07/09 2:30pm

Oh, come on. He was swish, not just effeminate. All he needed was a Las Vegas showgirl headpiece.

"Lack of subtlety?" Well...um...FUCK YOU. AFFECTIONATELY.

[Reply](#)

- [rini66](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 6:49pm

OMG that episode "Miri"

Is one of my stronger childhood memories. The entire thing was so disturbing to me. It definitely resonated. Although at the time, I didn't know why.

Good idea Decent execution.

Oh, and thanks for reminding me of the existence of Galaxy Quest. That's definitely my favorite Tim Allen movie...

Ok, it's the only one I've seen.

[Reply](#)

- [mbsrini66](#)

2/07/09 5:40am

I for one was a fan of For Richer or Poorer

That one will stand the test of time mark my words.

[Reply](#)

- [rini66](#)rini66

2/07/09 10:38am

Ha!

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)rini66

2/07/09 1:19pm

No love for The Santa Clause 3?

Oh, wait, of course not.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 2:10pm

Continuity Problems in the Redo

"Little Girls..." has probably one of the most glaring continuity problems created by the addition of the new special effects. It completely eliminates a scene where the Cassidy android is ordered by Nurse Chapel to rescue Kirk, and then references it later.

Otherwise, I find that the colors are better in the redo, and I'm still "fascinated" by how they are able to change the aspect ratio and make it look good.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Will You Marry Me

2/08/09 11:29am

Wait a minute...

The "new and improved" Lucasized versions (blech) edit out scenes?

What the hell?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Will You Marry Me

2/16/09 3:49am

Seriously though, 'redo'? I'm totally lost on this... Is this in the box-sets?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Zack Handlen

2/07/09 5:41am

I should give Miri another shot one year

I just hope its better then And The Children Shall Lead? with that kid with the squinched up face shaking his fist out...  
ugh.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)mbs

2/09/09 7:29am

Erm, yes it is, although as that is one of the worst eps of TOS, that's not really saying a huge amount. People will slag off Spock's Brain, and with some justification, but it's definitely not the worst that S3 produced. I still don't think Miri is a particularly strong episode though, I wouldn't rush back to it mbs

[Reply](#)

- [FS](#)mbs

2/12/09 10:36am

Sure, but it inspired a pretty funny MST3K routine.

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)Zack Handlen

2/06/09 12:00pm

The moral of "Little Girls"...

Never follow a mad scientist to a second location.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)urtext

2/06/09 4:46pm

I thought it was: Always make sure your android replica is more racist than you are.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)urtext

2/07/09 5:32am

Star Rock!

[Reply](#)

- [Cliffy](#)Zack Handlen

4/12/12 6:32pm

"Miri" is my first Star Trek memory. I guess I had seen the show before, but for some reason I really dug that ep when I watched it as a six or seven year old, and it always stuck in my mind after that. That's why it pains me when people slag it — I still think it's very good. Like Zack mentions, I love the pathos of Rand, finally acknowledging in the face of death what she never would back on the ship. And the frustration at Kirk's inability to fight back when the kids attack him — because they're just kids!

Also, I think the creepiness angle of the relationship between Miri and Kirk is way overblown. For whatever reason, I'm really good with kids, and more than once I've had a girl about Miri's age immediately develop a crush on me (family friends' kids, stuff like that). What else can you do but be genially noncommittal? You're not going to hurt her feelings by being brusque, so you act pleasantly interested and wait until it's time to go home. And of course, in this situation manipulating Miri is quite possibly the difference between life and death.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Zack Handlen



2/07/09 3:56pm

Mystery solved

I guess we know where Cylons come from now, it's that douche Korby and his goofy spin-clone machine.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Zack Handlen

2/07/09 3:56pm

Mystery solved

I guess we know where Cylons come from now, it's that douche Korby and his goofy spin-clone machine.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

1/04/14 7:57pm

Sherry Jackson was definitely HOTT!!

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Dagger Of The Mind" / "The Corbomite Maneuver"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 13, 2009

[Comments \(79\)](#)



Workplace romance is hardly ever a good idea. Dealing with the same people day in and day out is tricky enough; throw actual emotion into the mix, and you're inviting disaster. So you have a couple of drinks at an office mixer, and you and the temp suck face for a while in the break room. All fun and games, but the next thing you know, the temp is hired permanent, and you're spending your afternoons avoiding eye contact and trying to time your bathroom breaks around staff meetings. Love, or sex, or that weird area between second and third base where there's a lot of heavy breathing but no one really knows if anything actually gets done—it's complicated, and it doesn't need further complications.

And if you think the 9-to-5 version is rough, try doing all of that trapped in a giant tin can flying through a billion miles of nothing.

"Dagger Of The Mind" has the Enterprise investigating a psychologist and his potentially shady brain-warping experiments; once again, Kirk finds his way planet-side to put himself in harm's way, only this time, instead of a trained nurse, he's accompanied by Dr. Helen Noel, who spends most of her time on-screen trying to contradict Kirk into submission. And yeah, there's a history there. Nothing more scandalous than some dancing during a staff Christmas party (Noel—during a Christmas party. Does he hit on Maria Samhain come late October?), but when Kirk asks McCoy to provide him with an assistant for his trip, he's not happy with what he finds waiting on the transporter pad.

The awkward drama that ensues is "Dagger"'s weakest element, mostly because Helen just isn't likeable or clever enough to serve as a foil for Our James. It's yet another example of the writers trying to find ways to bring a starship captain back down to Earth, but it falls flat; while it's easy to relate to having to work with someone you don't feel comfortable around, Helen and Kirk's squabbling comes across as too petty and contrived, and they have the same chemistry levels as, say, a couch and a mildly annoyed cat. Apparently, Helen really wanted something more to happen after the party, which would be fine if the lady was ever given a personality beyond that desire. Oh, wait; she's bossy, and while Kirk is questioning the suspicious Dr. Tristan Adams (James Gregory, the idiot senator from *The Manchurian Candidate*), she keeps butting in to disagree with the captain.

The set-up: while on a routine supply run to penal colony on Tantalus V, the Enterprise picks up an unexpected guest. The stowaway manages to take out a number of crew-members before breaking onto the bridge and demanding asylum; one Vulcan neck pinch later, the crazy man is down for the count, and the Enterprise is pulling a U-turn to head back to the planet. Spock does some digging, and finds that their guest, Van Gelder, wasn't an inmate on Tantalus but a doctor working directly for the head man himself. Given Gelder's highly unstable state (the poor guy seems to be delivering his lines while getting his junk slow roasted), McCoy's suspicious, and Kirk decides to take a closer look. Dr. Adams is a pioneer in the field of prisoner rehabilitation, but as anybody knows, the better you look on the surface, the more chances you stand to be rotten underneath.

Enter Helen Noel, and all the banter she brings. The two beam down to the colony—note the matte painting here, swiped from “Where No Man Has Gone Before”—and are warmly greeted by Adams and his staff. Danger signs abound, from the assistant named Lethe (as in the river with the amnesia-inducing water) and the general thuggishness of the locals, as well as the neutralizer booth that Adams claims has been shut down, despite it being in use when Kirk and Helen walk by. Helen defends the good doctor, but Kirk won't have it, and insists on trying out the neutralizer for himself.

For all his talk about loving the Enterprise, Kirk spends a lot of time trying to get off ship and into the line of fire. Obviously he's got to be involved with every story; he's the hero of the show, and heroes don't sit around waiting for field reports. But there's something absurd about the lengths he'll go to, just to ensure he's in the worst position he can possibly be in. He comes down to Tantalus V with just one other person, despite the fact that, with Van Gelder neutralized, the Enterprise is in no danger from any of Dr. Adams' work. Then he finds the most likely smoking gun in the area and immediately sets the barrel to his temple, just to see if the damn thing has any bullets left. It's part of what makes the character so much fun, really; beneath all his heroism is an ego so large that he has to stick his nose in everything. If he wasn't so likeable, he'd be, well, William Shatner, I guess.

The session in the booth confirms Kirk's worst fears; not only is the neutralizer a hell of a lot more operational than Adams let on, the son of a bitch himself arrives and takes over the controls just when things were getting interesting. The machine works by blanking out a person's mind, allowing the controller in the next room to implant whatever desire or memories into the empty space. Given what we've seen of her so far, it's not really that surprising that Helen uses this as a way to try and bring her and Kirk closer—but while her actions are relatively innocuous, when Adams arrives with goon in tow, he pushes things to the edge. He tells the brain-drained Kirk that he's “in love” with Helen. Wackiness, thus, ensues.

Back aboard ship, Spock and McCoy are trying to get proof out of Van Gelder as to just what the hell's going on. Ultimately this proof won't have much impact on the plot; by the time they know Adams is up to no good, Kirk's already been taken prisoner and things have moved on to the “mwa-ha-ha” stage. But we do get our very first Vulcan mind meld here, when Spock decides to use a very personal ritual of his race to break through Gelder's constant crazy talk. Nimoy's one of the best actors on the show, and he makes what could've been a hopelessly goofy sequence fairly effective. The look of despair that crosses his face once he really gets a sense of what Gelder's going through is convincing, and it also ties in nicely with what we eventually learn about the neutralizer; when the mental slate is wiped clean, there's a whole lot of emptiness left behind, and that emptiness can break even the strongest will.

Like I said last week, *TOS* really works best when there's a strong sense of stakes. Here we've got Kirk and this week's guest star in moderate danger, with the rest of the crew largely out of the action; while the booth itself is a nifty concept, Adams isn't that compelling a villain. The most memorable thing about him is the way he gets his just desserts—he's stuck in the booth with his invention running and no one at the control panel to feed him new thoughts, so he has to face all that emptiness alone, and it kills him. I like how haunted Kirk looks by the episode's end, and I wish more time had spent with him struggling against the mind-warping. If “Dagger” had done a better job tying together his experience with Van Gelder's and Adams', this could've been more memorable. As is, it's got a handful of excellent moments (the mind-meld, that damn booth) that don't fit as well as they should.

After spending the last few episodes in the company of humans (or at least people who used to be human, or look and act exactly like a human would), it's nice to get some good, old-fashioned alien action in. “The Corbomite Maneuver” has our heroes dealing with a threat that surpasses them on nearly every level; a force whose motives are a mystery, and

whose hostility is immediate and decisive. This is *TOS* at its best—gripping, well-paced, and thematically coherent. Plus it's got a young Clint Howard, so what's not to like?

During a routine survey mission, the Enterprise comes across an unknown object blocking the way ahead. While Helmsman Bailey wigs out (hey look, a brand new guy on helm! I wonder if that will be important later on...), Spock and Sulu do their best to break away from turns out to be a giant, glowing cube, to no avail. Kirk gets interrupted during a check-up with McCoy—he's sweaty *and* shirtless, so yowza, I guess—but even he can't get free immediately. Discussion ensues; I always like seeing the whole group get together when some problem comes up, as there's something wonderfully rational about coming across a radioactive space-thingy and immediately sitting down with your co-workers for a nice chat. (The rationality is hurt somewhat by the fact there are no women involved in the discussion; here in the future, we welcome every race, color, or creed, and the ladies will bring y'all coffee!)

Everybody reacts to the current crisis as professionally as one would expect, except for poor old Bailey, who has come down with a serious case of the freak-outs. While Bailey sweats, Kirk renews efforts to escape the cube—the thing closes in on the ship emitting a deadly radiation, ultimately forcing Kirk to bust out the phasers and blow it away. Unhappy with their response time during the crisis, the captain sets the crew to running emergency drills, while he settles in for a talk with McCoy, discussing the well-being of the men (McCoy is concerned about Mr. Freak-Out, of course), and the tragedy of having the apparently smoking hot Rand as a Yeoman. Yeah, it's so hard not to sexually harass someone you're attracted to, y'know?

But we're not out of the woods yet. There's another, much, much, *much* bigger problem ahead; a giant orb made entirely of glowing bulbs that measures roughly a mile in diameter. Apparently, that "cube" that got blown up has a daddy, and Daddy is *pissed*.

"Corbomite" is one of the highpoints of the first season (and the show as a whole) for a number of reasons. The threat is a memorable one, as it's arguably the first time the show actually tried to exploit the blank check that limitless space and alien life provides. While the crude effects work doesn't always do the idea justice, conceptually, a mile-wide ship makes for an arresting visual; and what makes it even better is how well that visual dovetails with the episode's central argument. This is a smart script (by Jerry Sohl), giving us the problem that's been with us since the first episode—namely, the terror of the unknown—and then providing us with what at first seems to be a completely justification of that terror. As Helmsman Bailey gets more and more nervous, it's hard to fault him his fear; which makes the ultimate resolution of the storyline all the more satisfying.

The new, big-ass ship declares itself the Fesarius of the "First Federation" (!), and declares war on the Enterprise—the cube they destroyed was a warning buoy, and firing phasers on it was an unforgivable act of violence. Kirk tries to explain, but the other ship isn't buying; Spock manages to get a visual on the captain, Balok, and he is a not a happy looking dude. ("Balok"'s frozen face appears during the end credits of every episode, and it always used to freak me out as a kid. What's cool is how fake it looks; the visual Spock generates is murky enough to keep it ambiguous, but I can imagine a clever first-time viewer seeing the puppet and thinking its phoniness was just part of the show's usual so-so effects work.) Despite Kirk's best efforts, the sentence is laid down; the Enterprise will be destroyed, and there isn't a damn thing anybody can do about it.

Or is there? One of the big problems of sci-fi stories is coming up with problem solutions that don't revolve around magic-bullets. When your characters are working with a technology that doesn't actually exist in the real world, there's always the temptation to make up new technology whenever the need arises. Backed into a corner? Reverse the polarity! Everyone dead except for your main character? Flip the Romero/West switch! Lost viewers sick of the lazy-ass writing that can't be bothered to follow consistent rules? Reverse the—um—crap.

*Star Trek* is no stranger to this sort of thing, but even before it was a cliché, "Corbomite" turns the concept on its ear. As the clock counts down to destruction, Spock tells Kirk that he can see no logical alternative to death; as in chess, when one player is over-matched, the game is over. But Kirk, clever bastard that he is, changes the game (shades of the Kobayashi Maru here)—it's not chess, it's poker, and even if they can't come up with some magic tech to make the bad Balok go away, *Balok* doesn't know that. So, with the lives of over four hundred men and women and his beloved ship at stake, Kirk pulls a bluff. He tells the freaky alien that the Enterprise has a substance aboard known as corbomite. It's lethally destructive to any force that dares attack the ship. Corbomite is a standard addition to all Starfleet vessels, and since its initial inception, it's never, ever failed.

How stone cold is that shit? Oh sure, as lies go, corbomite is hilariously convenient, but as a bluff, it's crudely effective; just as our heroes can't be sure of the scope of Balok's abilities, he himself can't know everything there is to know about them. And crude or not, it's incredibly satisfying to see Kirk give his speech and then, when Balok demands proof, immediately cut communications short. The Enterprise and her crew spend a good chunk of their time getting dangled around like cat-toys in the paws of frustratingly omnipotent felines; it's nice to see them get the upper hand, and even nicer that they do it through wit alone.

There's more shenanigans to follow, but really, once Kirk manages to out-will the commander of the opposing ship, the battle is basically over. There's one final twist; after finally breaking free of the Fesarius' hold, Kirk, McCoy, and Bailey beam aboard—only to find that what we thought was "Balok" really was a puppet after all, and the actual creature is a bald-headed kid with a booming voice and freaky laugh. It's a swell metaphor for how fear of the unknown can be more dangerous than the unknown itself, but it's a little unintentionally creepy, too. Howard is freaky looking, and his request for a companion off the Enterprise—and Bailey's immediate acceptance of that request—makes you wonder how weird things are going to be once Kirk and the others make their exit. ("Hey, so what are all these knives for, anyway? And why do you keep telling me I have great skin?")

"Corbomite" is fun for all sorts of reasons, but the one that stays with you the longest is the optimism. Throughout the episode, Kirk tries to explain to Bailey (and us) why he refuses to give up hope; any intelligent life capable of space-travel, he says, has to be smart enough for peace. There's something almost hopelessly naïve about that (especially given the number of war-faring races we'll eventually stumble across), but it's worth believing in, even if it doesn't always prove to be true.

#### **Grades:**

**"Dagger Of The Mind": B**

**"The Corbomite Maneuver": A**

#### **Stray Observations:**

—I love the chest-level duct work that runs through Adams' facility. I also dug the way Adams and his goons locked Kirk and Helen up, and then immediately forgot they'd captured Helen once she made her escape.

—Starfleet really isn't that effective a regulatory body, is it?

—Spock: "Has it occurred to you that there is a certain... inefficiency in constantly questioning me on things you've already made up your mind about?"

Kirk: "It gives me emotional security."

—Kirk to Bailey: "The face of the unknown. I think I owe you a look at it." Good dialogue, great pick-up line.

—Next week, parts 1 and 2 of "The Menagerie."

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (79)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [LevZack Handlen](#)

2/13/09 1:00pm

Nice review

Looking forward to next week. The Menagerie is a pretty classic episode—one of the few stories I can think of that are improved by a framing device.

[Reply](#)

- [HenryLev](#)

2/13/09 2:23pm

Yeah, I always thought it was boring. I'm really looking forward to evil spock, myself.

[Reply](#)

- [Crankypants McGee](#)Lev

2/13/09 2:30pm

The original pilot that they stole all those "flashback" sequences out of for the Menagerie was actually pretty good, I thought. Wow, I am a giant nerd.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Lev

2/13/09 2:56pm

Wait a tick. Isn't there one of those trademarked green women in The Menagerie?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Lev

2/13/09 3:01pm

No, it's more like THE trademarked green woman.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Lev

2/13/09 3:07pm

Oh yes, the dancing Orion lady. Men seem to like her.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Lev

2/13/09 4:00pm

Man, once the discussion turns to "green Batgirl" you get a sudden sense of your own nerdiness ... which should've been a given early on, since this is the Star Trek section of the TV blog.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Lev

2/13/09 4:18pm

I was more referring to Orian slave girl's omnipresence in the end credits every week.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Lev

2/13/09 4:37pm

Guess I need to turn in my nerd card, I had NO idea that was Batgirl. Had to Google her to even figure out what you were talking about (Kirk seduced by a Bat girl? How did I miss that?)

Gratuitous pix for drooling purposes found here:

<http://www.themakeupgallery...>

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)Lev

2/13/09 5:15pm

Awesome link, I'm going to use the phrase "Anybody who can grow a beard can grow their eyebrows back" regularly from now on.

[Reply](#)

- [gusano cerebro](#)Lev

2/13/09 5:32pm

For me, the Menagerie provided one of the most iconic images in scifi - the crippled Captain Archer. I do agree that it was Rodenberry (or more likely, the network) being cheap, and that both the original story (You can have everything you've ever dreamed of, but it won't be real!) and the framing device (Why is Spock acting like this? Find out, after nine more commercial breaks!) were lacking.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Lev

2/14/09 8:06am

As a quasi-nerd, I should know this, but why didn't they keep Jeffrey Hunter? Did he die?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Lev

2/14/09 10:01am

Hunter was off working in movies when they were filming the Menagerie, which is why Pike's post-accident makeup had to be extreme enough to cover the fact that it was a different actor. I think he wound up dying just a couple years later from a brain hemorrhage.

[Reply](#)

- [gusano cerebro](#)Lev

2/14/09 11:43am

Sigh....I'm not that dumb, I swear! I would like to see Archer immobilized and unable to communicate, along with the rest of the cast of that god-awful show.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Lev

2/15/09 7:17am

I'd have to see it again...or at the very least read Zach's review to jog my memory of exactly what happened. lookin' foward to it tho.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Lev

2/15/09 10:48am

"Way to kill the franchise, Bakula!"

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 12:04pm

Great Review

I'm really digging these reviews. It's great to point out the cheesy-ness of the old series without bashing it, and I'm glad Zack can point out the oddness of the series with good humor and appreciation. I'm paitiently waiting for the review of "The Doomsday Machine" which is my all-time favorite ep of TOS. It also makes me wish for reviews of TNG, although that's a pretty tall order.

[Reply](#)

- [gibson99](#)Right Wingnut

2/13/09 1:41pm

tvssquad.comYou should enjoy Wil Wheaton's write-ups on TNG over at .

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)Right Wingnut

2/13/09 2:20pm

Wil's reviews are fantastic; too bad they're so few and far-between.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Right Wingnut

2/13/09 3:06pm

Doomsday is a great ep, but if I had to pick a hand's down favorite it would probably be "Amok Time". Because I was obsessed with Spock, but it's also a damn fine epsidoe.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Right Wingnut

2/13/09 4:27pm

Doomsday & Balance of Terror are both right up there for me.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Right Wingnut

2/14/09 8:03am

These are nice...they are filling my PD void for now. And I always though that whoever played Spock's wife in Amok Time was BEAUTIFUL. I always wondered who she was. If only there were an information base on which I could look up these things...

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Right Wingnut

2/15/09 7:14am

its a good review if it makes me wanna watch the thing i'm reading about right now...so yeah definitely a good review —and i've seen these eps too! My favorites would be the one with the chicago gangsters and All Our Yesterdays... something about Spock in that library/time portal.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Right Wingnut

2/15/09 10:36am

@Sugartits

The actress who played T'Pring shows up as a Vulcan priestess herself in the fan made "Star Trek: Of Gods and Men".

@mbs

AOY is one of my favorite episodes (Doomsday, too). Mariette Hartley left quite an impression on my young libido, and to this day I find her Zarabeth one of the most compelling female characters ever in TOS, and her ultimate fate was sad indeed. In the pantheon of Trek hotties, I think she's underappreciated.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Right Wingnut

2/17/09 11:37am

Let's not forget "The Conscience of the King"!

But "Devil in the Dark" may be my favorite.

[Reply](#)

- [The Horta](#)Right Wingnut

2/20/09 3:26pm

Amen to that, brother.

[Reply](#)



Hide replies

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 11:23am

Hey

Great review, but why are you using Kif as the photograph?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 11:54am

Because he's dreamy, dammit.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 12:11pm

The best part of that Star Trek/Futurama episode was Kif subbing in for "Balok" in the end credits.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 12:18pm

Forgot about that. More reason that ep. is the best Trek parody ever.

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 2:00pm

That was one of the most absolutely perfect jokes I've ever seen. Saw it on a TV in a bar, and people were staring at me as I almost choked to death from laughing for ten minutes. All over a two-second still image. That's comedic efficiency!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 4:35pm

The Kif-as-Balok joke tops that episode off perfectly, but my favorite joke was:

"For all his power, he was still just a child."

"He's not a child, he's 35!"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 4:42pm

And the cloud-mom with cat-eye glasses! Good times.

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_Hungus](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 5:03pm

WELLSHIIEEEE!!!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_Hungus](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 5:03pm

WELLLSHIIIEEEE!!!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/13/09 5:21pm

God that joke still cracks me up, every friggin time! Poor Fry.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

2/15/09 7:11am

ohhh Mom!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [George Liquor](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 4:28pm

Hey AV Club

Which version of Star Trek are you reviewing, the original release or the new release with the fancied-up special effects?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)George Liquor

2/13/09 5:32pm

Original release.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)George Liquor

2/14/09 2:07am

That's good. I noticed on at least a couple of occasions where the new effects screw with an episode's continuity.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)George Liquor

2/15/09 7:20am

well you know paramount still tryin' to squeeze out every last cent it can from a 40 year old franchise.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)George Liquor

2/16/09 4:39am

I've never heard of these new versions. I have the set with the coloured plastic boxes with the Starfleet Insignia...

Is there a way to see the gussied-up versions?

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)George Liquor

2/16/09 10:32am

Aside from shelling out big bucks for them?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 12:15pm

Checkerboard Chick

Since I'm wallowing in Trek geekdom... As a kid I was always baffled by how many hours Yeoman Rand spent each morning basket-weaving her beehive. I think eventually I decided that she must have some futuristic Jetsons-like contraption that did it for her. Gimme a break, I was a 9-year-old kid, I didn't know from wigs.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/13/09 1:18pm

Nanites did her hair.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/13/09 3:19pm

Duh, it's not hair, it's just a hologram.

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/13/09 5:12pm

I always assumed it was a hat, or some advanced form of tribble.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/15/09 7:15am

prob some kind of futuristic curlers.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/15/09 10:42am

I'd rather have futuristic crullers.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 3:55pm

Dr. Helen Noel

While I can't entirely disagree with Zack's appraisal of the character of Helen Noel, I feel compelled to note, in an entirely and admittedly puerile fashion, that I've always considered her the hottest of the Original Series' babes.

And Fun Fact: the actress who played her, Marianna Hill, also portrayed Fredo's floozy showgirl wife Deanna in The Godfather Part II.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Captain Jamuary

2/13/09 7:15pm

Absolutely agree.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Captain Jamuary

2/13/09 11:48pm

A nice little camera move and musical sting, too. TOS was so good at that. And yes, "hot-DAYUM!"

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Captain Jamuary

2/15/09 7:20am

ha the godfather 2! now i totally know who she is.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Captain January

2/16/09 5:01am

Also with Elvis and in Medium Cool...

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 7:48pm

Too much Corbomite

Kirk uses the Corbomite bluff at the end of "The Deadly Years", also, to scare off the Romulans. He needs to come up with a new trick before all these alien races start comparing notes.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Breakfast Balls

2/14/09 10:03am

Eh, if no one ever calls his bluff, what's the difference?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Breakfast Balls

2/15/09 7:22am

well eventually his exploits do get noted by many of the different species..but i imagine he'll always find a way to bluff his way out of hairy situations...its not a matter of the aliens being aware of his tricks or even that he's tricky..its using whatever you have to your advantage. KIRK!

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 12:04pm

Clint!

The role Clint Howard was born to play

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)Sir Poodlesnort

2/13/09 2:01pm

And we shall drink trania! HaHaaaaHahHaHa!!

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Sir Poodlesnort

2/13/09 2:19pm

Gentlemen! Please!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Sir Poodlesnort

2/14/09 8:01am

I never got was was so funny about the tranya...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 12:11pm

South Park ep.

I'm sure you've all seen it already, but if not, South Park did a brilliant riff on "Dagger." Featuring the man with an affliction which prevents him from pronouncing the T in the word "plane—arium." Dopey, but a real larf.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/15/09 7:14am

how do you hate south park? too crude?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/15/09 10:41am

His name is even Dr. Adams! Oh, and the inscription over the door to the Plane...arium sez: "Me transmittē sursum, Caledoni."

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 3:55pm

Dr. Helen Noel

While I can't entirely disagree with Zack's appraisal of the character of Helen Noel, I feel compelled to note, in an entirely and admittedly puerile fashion, that I've always considered her the hottest of the Original Series' babes.

And Fun Fact: the actress who played her, Marianna Hill, also portrayed Fredo's floozy showgirl wife Deanna in The Godfather Part II.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Captain Jamuary

2/13/09 7:15pm

Still agree.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Captain Jamuary

2/16/09 4:53am

Definitely a dish... She was kind of a quintessential sixties babe, in an Elvis film and nekked in the legendary Medium Cool...

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 12:00pm

It's freaky

Clint Howard looks exactly the same now as he did back then.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)El Zilcho

2/14/09 8:01am

Kind of an early Sam Rockwell...

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)El Zilcho

2/15/09 7:11am

i think Clint is actually balder...but he is somehow the exact same height.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/09 3:25pm

Hey, Lost is awesome!

"Lost viewers sick of the lazy-ass writing that can't be bothered to follow consistent rules?"

I thought you were making a crack at Lost fans or the show's writers for a minute there.

[Reply](#)

- [mbsscotteb](#)

2/15/09 7:19am

Reverse Crap Engines.

Ay...Crap Reversed Sir.

[Reply](#)

- [Real Koko](#)Zack Handlen

7/11/14 12:49am

"... The rationality is hurt somewhat by the fact there are no women involved in the discussion; here in the future, we welcome every race, color, or creed, and the ladies will bring y'all coffee!"

Just double-checked.

Yep. Uhura was seated at that conference table, and not taking short-hand. Just trying not to doze off.

[Reply](#)

- [tejanojim](#)Real Koko

6/01/15 1:17am

Yeah, you right bro.

[Reply](#)

- [Real Koko](#)Zack Handlen

1/05/13 3:33am

Yes, I know, I'm posting this in a room that's been empty for years, but I'm gonna write this on the wall, for anyone who follows, because I actually had to go back and check the episode, and see if I was crazy. (And it's official: I am not crazy.)

"

Discussion ensues; I always like seeing the whole group get together when some problem comes up, as there's something wonderfully rational about coming across a radioactive space-thingy and immediately sitting down with your co-workers for a nice chat. (The rationality is hurt somewhat by the fact there are no women involved in the discussion; here in the future, we welcome every race, color, or creed, and the ladies will bring y'all coffee!) "

Uhura is sitting \*right there\* throughout the conference scene, and if we can go by the captain's log in the scene opening, she's been there with the rest of the bridge crew, going over their options, for about 17 hours. Nor does she serve anyone coffee, though coffee is served. And while she doesn't speak within the actual scene, well, neither does Scotty, McCoy or Sulu. (At least not until they are getting up and leaving the conference room.)

It funny, because with such a smorgasbord of opportunities to make note of the visible lack of actively engaged, competent women in TOS, someone finally decides to comment on it in a review... and apparently chooses the wrong scene to illustrate that point.

[Reply](#)

- [DBreneman](#)Zack Handlen

5/26/13 12:18am

I've got to agree with "Real Koko" on this point. I just happened across these reviews today, and although I enjoy reading them, the author seems hell-bent on shaming 1960s culture by modern standards. That was fifty-freakin'-years

ago. Times change. Star Trek was revolutionary in its day *for* its cultural inclusiveness and diversity. The cringes the author elaborately undergoes at any suggestion of a culture less self-consciously "diverse" than our own seem silly in a review of what is by now the work times gone by. It's like complaining that "Citizen Kane" wasn't shot in Imax. But beyond that, I am greatly enjoying these reviews.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 6:43am

Kirk the Liberal

It is interesting how liberal Kirk is in these two episodes. In Dagger of the Mind, he is a champion of Dr. Adams' prison reforms which concentrated on rehabilitation. In Corbomite, he does everything he can to avoid the use of force.

For a military commander, he seems very open minded. Very much a product of the 60s.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Zack Handlen

2/16/09 11:25am

Kirk The Hero

"It's part of what makes the character so much fun, really; beneath all his heroism is an ego so large that he has to stick his nose in everything."

Everyone knew he was wrong, too - that's why TNG made a big deal about Riker keeping Picard on the ship.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen

2/16/09 10:34am

We need more Clint!

I'd have loved it, if even in just a cameo, Clint Howard's Balok had appeared in one of the Trek movies.

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek: "The Menagerie"*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 20, 2009

[Comments \(104\)](#)



For all its throbbing-vein aliens and green-skinned slave girls, the two-part “Menagerie” finds its most iconic image in the fate of the poor Christopher Pike. Check out the picture—the guy saved some kids from deadly “delta-rays,” and for his troubles, he’s paralyzed, horribly scarred, and forced to spend the rest of his life in a giant black box. Sure, the box lets him communicate; one beep for yes, two beeps for no. I can’t imagine a conversation that would require anything more nuanced than that. Plus, the thing moves like a motorized wheelchair, so I don’t think he has anything to complain about, right?

The design is striking enough to be the subject of parody and fan-worship, but not even familiarity can diminish how simultaneously neat and utterly retarded the damn thing is. Common sense raises all sorts of issues here. There are quadriplegics with more mobility than Pike, and while allowances can be made for the fact that we’re never told exactly what delta rays do, it’s hard to imagine something that could render a man so inert that magic-future-tech can’t save him, and yet he still doesn’t die. And even if we’re willing to accept that, what the hell is up with the two beeps? Nobody had the time to teach him Morse Code?

But there is something nightmarish about that absurdity. The folks behind *TOS* were clearly trying to come up with the most horrible living death they could, and while it doesn’t really scan logic-wise, it does serve as a perfect example of “shit I don’t want happening to me.” Pike’s predicament has to be sufficiently dire for “Menagerie” to work at all; anything less than utterly horrible, and Spock’s actions would go from ill-advised to downright inexplicable. As it is, watching the cool-headed half-Vulcan engage a one-man operation to take control of the Enterprise is kind of fun, so long as you don’t spend too much time wondering about the consequences.

“Where No Man Has Gone Before” was the first *Star Trek* pilot to air, but it wasn’t the first one filmed; Roddenberry originally tried his idea out with “The Cage,” featuring a slightly different Enterprise and an almost entirely different cast. “Menagerie” has two plots. The first has Spock turning mutinous, steering the Enterprise towards the forbidden planet of Talos IV, and then surrendering himself to a court martial; which leads us to plot two, focusing on Pike’s adventures on Talos IV years ago, back when he was captain of the Enterprise, the First Officer was a woman (gasp!), and Spock himself had a wider variety of facial expressions. This second storyline is made up of footage cannibalized



from that first pilot, presented to Kirk (and us) as a visual recording made by the awesomely powerful Talosians. Clips shows are nothing new to TV, but this is something different—flashbacking to a rerun that never actually aired in the first place.

Different can be good, and back before VHS and DVD releases, this was probably the only way most people could see “The Cage” even in an abbreviated form. And it really is worth seeing; partly because the story isn’t half bad, but also because it does a great job of showing just how important casting was to *TOS*, and how crucial the chemistry between Kirk, Spock, McCoy and the rest is towards making the series work. When Roddenberry presented them with his first version of *Star Trek*, the network complained it was too brainy, without enough action, and while I don’t think it’s possible to be “too brainy,” I have to admit, the suits were on to something. “Cage” is clever enough, but there’s hardly any humor, and even less warmth. It’s a show that’s better respected than enjoyed.

Take Jeffrey Hunter as Captain Pike. (Hunter’s only in the “Cage” clips; Sean Kennedy plays the inanimate-object version we get in the “present” sections of the episode.) He’s a solid actor—before his untimely death at 43, he’d done a lot of TV and movie work, including a great turn in *The Searchers*. There’s nothing obviously wrong about his performance as Pike; he’s believable, and he commits to the premise. But he’s not all that much *fun*. Whatever you say about Shatner, he’s got charisma coming out his ears as Kirk; Hunter is too grim. You buy that he’s world-weary, you buy that’s he’s furious at his captors, and you definitely buy his talent for “primitive thoughts,” but you don’t really want to spend week after week planet hopping with him. It’d be like vacationing with a guy who only wants to visit Holocaust museums.

The rest of the cast is similarly restrained. It’s nice having a female with a rank above nurse or secretary, but Majel Barrett isn’t given a whole lot to do; at one point, Vina, the woman the Talosians are trying to mate Pike with, accuses her of being like a “computer,” but it’s more a clever line than an accurate character assessment. (Makes for an unintentional in-joke, too, since Barrett would go on to voice most of the computers in the series.) The doctor’s generic, the yeoman is cuter than Rand but not much else; the only real personality we get is from Spock. Ironically, out of the lot, Nimoy is the one who gets to display the widest range of emotion, but even he seems to be floundering. I’m sure things would’ve solidified if this pilot had been picked up, but it’s not hard to see why it wasn’t.

At least the actual story of “The Cage” is strong. The Enterprise gets a distress signal from Talos IV, and stops to investigate; they find what at first appears to be a colony of survivors from a crashed ship, a bunch of old scientists and one pretty young blonde. Within moments, though, the old guys vanish, and the blonde, Vina, spirits Captain Pike away. It was all a set-up by a bunch of big-brained natives—they’ve got this zoo going, and they want to bring in Pike so Vina will have a partner. Plus there’s something about the Talosians being a dying race, who need hot-blooded humans around to keep them alive. Standard alien stuff.

The Talosians are masters of telepathy and illusion, and one of the big strengths of the “The Cage” (and the parts of it that appear in “The Menagerie”) is how consistently those abilities are displayed. We never see the aliens engaging in shows of physical prowess, and their mental powers never blur into telekinesis. Instead, the big balds get what they want through trickery. After imprisoning Pike, they use a variety of fantasy scenarios to try and fool him into wanting Vina; he doesn’t fall for it, of course, although he does have a struggle over the “Orion slave girl” bit. But the fantasy doesn’t end there. Pike’s crew is frantically trying to break down the door to rescue their errant captain, but their weapons seem to have no effect on the structure. “Seem” being the operative word; it’s ultimately revealed that the barrier was destroyed early on, but the Talosians were projecting the *image* of an undestroyed barrier. The same way they convinced Pike and company that their phasers were inoperative; the same way they punished Pike for not obeying their wishes.

And the same way they make Vina look like an eighteen year-old girl (okay, they *say* she’s supposed to look eighteen, so I’ll play along), when she was really the only survivor of the crash from so long ago. When her true appearance is revealed, it’s a little heartbreaking; the Talosians rebuilt her, she’s healthy—but they had never seen a human before.

All very sad, and, while it has its problems, “Cage” would’ve made a solid hour-long *Twilight Zone* episode. But that’s not exactly what we get in “The Menagerie”; while Roddenberry manages to reuse a good chunk of film, the whole thing plays out over two hours, and with a framing story from the regular cast that, while dramatic, doesn’t quite gel.

Spock's behavior here, while not completely out of character, favors impulse over logic to a distressing extent. His motives are largely a mystery till the second part of the ep, but once we discover what's driving him—he's trying to get Pike back to Talos IV, where he can spend the remainder of his box-life living a carefree, illusion-based life—the knowledge doesn't really justify everything we've seen him do. Mr. "The Needs Of The Many Outweigh The Needs Of The One" is putting the lives of the entire crew in jeopardy just so his old boss can get an upgrade in nursing homes. Apparently, loyalty to his former commander trumps his loyalty to Kirk and Starfleet; while he doesn't *exactly* betray his current captain, you can't imagine Kirk being all that happy to have the Enterprise stolen away by his most trusted subordinate. And the main reason for all the subterfuge is bizarre; people are forbidden from visiting Talos IV on pain of death. Why, exactly? The Talosians are creepy, but once they realize that human beings hate captivity, they leave off quickly enough. The only real justification for the extreme measure is to justify a Spock's trial, a trial we need if we want to get all that "Cage" footage in.

As for the use of that footage—surely it could've been trimmed a bit. Gene wants to get as much bang for his buck, but spending all that time away from Kirk and Spock diminishes the conflict that's supposedly driving the episode. There's no real reason for this to be a two-parter, and the more we learn about the Talosians, the more we suspect that Spock's coup, though bad-ass, wasn't all that necessary. By the end credits, we've found that the court martial was a mock-up created for Kirk's benefit, which means the aliens have an astonishing range with their mind control powers. (Enough to make that whole "death penalty" thing largely irrelevant; if they really wanted to, they could've tricked somebody from Starbase 11 to drop by.) And then there's the way that the charges against Spock are tossed lightly aside, because, hey, he did everything with the best of intentions. Intentions or not, he stole the Enterprise, as well as defrauded the captain and assaulted a number of Starfleet personnel. At the very least, a slap on the wrist would've been nice.

But that would've taken away from our supposedly happy ending, with the crippled Pike reunited with Vina to spend out the rest of their days in artificially induced heaven. It's a rare moment of string-free wish fulfillment; in general, *TOS* tends to favor hard truth over even the most pleasant lie, and idyllic lives are hardly ever presented without cost. We're supposed to trust the Talosians motives here, but it's hard not to remember what they did to Pike the last time he put his will against theirs. There's something unsettling about abandoning a man that helpless to creatures who we still don't understand all that well, regardless of how much better that abandonment appears to the alternative. "The Menagerie" is a hodge-podge, written primarily as a money-saver, and the various parts never fit together that well, but it has its moments. Pike in that hateful box is still unnerving, and glad as we are to see him free of that box, the ambiguity of that freedom—that he's now entirely at the whim of a race he basically doomed to slow death years ago—is hard to ignore.

**Grade: B-**

**Stray Observations:**

- On it's own, "The Cage" would rate a B+. Chopping it up and stretching it out does it no favors.
- What is it with captains and pretty yeomen?
- Watching Kirk defend Spock's honor so vehemently makes his willingness to forgive Spock's betrayal at the end hard to believe. (Although maybe he was just that flattered that everyone had gone to such trouble to win him over.)
- Up next week, "The Conscience of the King" and "Balance of Terror."

**DISCUSSION**

- Community (104)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [FortyTwo](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 10:42am

The Cage

Somewhere along the line, I did get a chance to see "The Cage" in its entirety without "The Menagerie" framing it. They actually did something pretty clever with the last scene of the original when they reworked it; in "The Menagerie,"

there's shot of Vina and Pike on the planet together, showing that Pike is now free from his debilitating condition (well, not really, but ostensibly). In the original, that wasn't actually Pike; the Telosians gave Vina an illusion of Pike staying to keep her happy.

/Since I'm a woman, all this Trek knowledge makes me sexy rather than pathetic, right?

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 10:47am

I saw the uncut pilot once myself, and all I remember is that Spock really wasn't in it as much as I expected.

And with that knowledge and your HHGTG avatar, you would have your choice of mates at ComicCon.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 10:52am

I was wondering about that last shot; it's been a while since I watched "The Cage" on its own.

[Reply](#)

- [The Great Wolf](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 11:02am

Well, Robert, FortyTwo would have her choice after this chick dressed as Street Fighter Cammy:

<http://procesador.wordpress...>

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 11:29am

\*eye bulge\*

\*wolf whistle\*

\*nosebleed\*

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 12:50pm

Wait, Trek knowledge is only sexy if you're a woman? Damn, that explains what I've been doing wrong all these years!

[Reply](#)

- [Dripping yellow madness](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 1:23pm

I'm a tranny and a Space: 1999 fan who looks like a butch Barbara Bain and I haven't done too bad for myself.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 1:55pm

Hey, I'm a Trek chick too. How do I rate with this avatar?

One of the best parts of this article was it's ability to articulate more clearly why this episode, while good (I'll defend them all, even the hippie space children episode and "Spock's Brain"), never really sat right with me. I enjoyed all Spock centered drama's, but his ultimately illogical actions in this ep were jarring, to say the least.

Incidentally, my inability to recall the name of the hippie space children episode is going to drive me batty until I look it up. I used to have the names of all the eps memorized. I was a deeply weird child.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 2:01pm

All the girls like Spock and his killer lyre action.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 2:27pm

I think it's a good thing that you eventually forget the names of the all the episodes. That's the difference between a Trekkie and a Trekker. I'm going to take a guess and say Last of Eden? (and gimme Spock in Nazi jail w/green whip marks any day!)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 2:34pm

Close. It's "The Way to Eden". And I didn't have to look that up! How sexy is that?

Oops, got my sexes confused again.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 2:41pm

Once upon a time, I would have been able to recall that tidbit of knowledge with zero effort. Alas, to have replaced all that Trek knowledge with personality theories and poker strategies.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 3:18pm

You and me both, DCRJ. I can remember a time where these episodes were burned in my memory, and now that I'm rewatching them, I realize how much I've forgotten. Although I've replaced my Trek knowledge with crazy Lost theories and Civilization III strategies. I'm still up for an AV Club poker tournament, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 4:43pm

The end of the reconstructed Cage had a kind of double logic backflip ending that foreshadowed a lot of later stupid things having to do with parallel universes, individuality, The Matrix and assorted other crap.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 4:49pm

i wish i had you with me when i stumbled on The Way To Eden a couple years back lazily passing the day away in my sister's apt flipping thru channels (cause it was too cold and snowy to do anything else—I wouldn't want to but she's not content to sit around the house) anyways we watched The Way To Eden and she couldn't stop rolling her eyes at it..and i was trying like hell to explain to her why the show was so great...but The Way To Eden was kinda hard to explain away.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 5:04pm

Spock's illogical actions didn't really bother me. in fact, i kinda thought it was the point; Spock, a supposedly unemotional and purely logical person willing to go to such great lengths to help out his former captain. when you factor in Spock's human side, it works, imo.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 5:15pm

scotteb - Civilization III strategies? You need to get to work replacing those with Civilization IV strategies, chop chop!

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 5:22pm

I know, but I need to get a new computer first. That's on my list of things to get this year, and I plan to make Civ IV my first software purchase for it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 5:43pm

Should we wait until "The Way to Eden" shows up in the column to find out how it can be defended, or will DCRJ enlighten us in advance?

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)FortyTwo

2/20/09 9:26pm

Maybe at this point it's \*so\* dated it actually works again.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [El Zilcho](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 10:29am

\*BEEP BEEP\*

Double yes!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 10:53am

I bet we never get through this series without at least one Futurama or Galaxy Quest reference every week. And that's a good thing.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 10:57am

Uh, can people who hate Star Trek leave?

[Reply](#)

- [Cyborg Duck Penis Panda Cat](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 11:13am

No, they have to stay even longer!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 12:54pm

Shows like Futurama and Animaniacs make life so very surreal. You spend the rest of your life getting jokes that shot right past you the first time. Seeing Fry's wheelchair at the top of the page wasn't quite as bewildering as the time my clock radio woke me up with the real version of folk-rock troubadour Donovan's ode to the sunken city of Atlanta, but still. Pop-culture-savvy shows just keep on giving.

[Reply](#)

- [Cyborg Duck Penis Panda Cat](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 1:57pm

Idiot! I meant the rhyming Becktionary!

whoops, that wasn't relevant.

I'm a 10th level vice president!

[Reply](#)

- [S. Jerusalem](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 4:13pm

Star Trek taught me a lot of things, like how you should accept people whether they be black, white, Klingon, or even female...

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 4:41pm

Every time a door opens on Futurama, it's Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 4:45pm

it taught me not to get in the middle of a civil war between someone who's black on the left side of his face (and white on the right side) AND someone who's white on the left side of his face (and black on the right side)

Also Hail Atlanta!

[Reply](#)

- [Cyborg Duck Penis Panda Cat](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 4:49pm

Way to ruin the franchise, Bakula!

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_Hungus](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 5:12pm

Wasn't there an episode where I threw my shoe at the alien?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 5:45pm

I see they put a CGI window in that room in the latest incarnation. Nice.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)El Zilcho

2/20/09 6:23pm

Carl- You mean Doohan?

[Reply](#)

- [foodie](#)El Zilcho

2/21/09 1:24am

My foot is cold.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [foodie](#)El Zilcho

2/21/09 1:47am

Are you talking about the vast migration of Star Wars fans?

No, that was the Star Wars Trek.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)El Zilcho

2/21/09 11:56am

Sigh. Eternity with nerds. It's the Pasadena Star Trek convention all over again.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 10:55am

Errand of Mercy

I can't wait until Zack gets to that ep. Whatever happened to the Organians, anyway? Shouldn't Commander Kruge have been a little more concerned about them?

[Reply](#)

- [MurrayTheSkull](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 11:35am

The ep I'm looking forward to most is "City on the Edge of Forever." One of the finest hours of TV ever.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 11:58am

You have to wonder, with all the "all-powerful" aliens that the TOS crew managed to meet (the Organians, the First Federation, for example) where were they when the Borg decided to start showing up in our neck of the galaxy? Coulda used some help there, guys.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 12:00pm

City on the Edge of Forever had to be one of the darkest stories to make it to primetime network TV at that point. I just watched that one and was surprised that they followed through with that ending.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 1:30pm

I can't wait for the promised Space Seed / TWOK installment.

"for hate's sake, I spit my last breath at thee"

In fact, I can't wait for any ep I've seen recently - ever since this feature started I started recording all of the episodes I can find on my DVR but haven't hit on one yet, so I'm going to check them out via Netflix now. in between the

remasters (which are the definition of how remasters should be done) and the discussions here, i'm re-experiencing Trek in a way I haven't since I was a child.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 2:08pm

CBS online also now has all the TOS episodes available, I believe. I personally have all the DVDs myself, and let me tell you how pissed off I was when they finally converted TOS to Season box sets. I already owned all the two episode DVDs (40 of them!). WTF am I supposed to do now?

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 3:27pm

Two words: eBay.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 3:41pm

The CBS online player is full of bugs, so I've been watching on YouTube. And I found a website that's selling the box sets of every Star Trek series, from TOS to Enterprise for around \$400. I'm so tempted to buy it, but Voyager and Enterprise would probably just sit around and gather dust, so I'm not sure it's worth it.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 4:51pm

which is the ep with the kilingons and kirk and spock stuck on a planet by the beam of pure light energy? and they have to use teamwork to stop the beam of light?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 5:46pm

They had huge Organs. That is all.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/20/09 11:47pm

What would you call the Q?

[Reply](#)

- [MurrayTheSkull](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/21/09 12:34am

Good point on Q, and the Borg were pretty damn intimidating, too.

[Reply](#)

- [foodie](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

2/21/09 1:30am

I would call Q awesome.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 12:16pm



They had never seen a human before...

So, if the Talosians had never seen a human, why in the world didn't they reconstruct Vina to look more like themselves, you know 2 arms, 2 legs, symmetrically placed. For such an advanced race, did they really think that the left shoulder goes way up by the top of the head which sits at a 40 degree angle?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 12:24pm

Maybe the line should've been "never seen a \_working\_ human before." There were some bodies in the crash; maybe they thought that was the standard model?

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 1:51pm

@standard

Yeah, screw those wet, pale, Japanese kids. That kid from Dr. Who was way fucking creepier.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 2:50pm

So, if the Talosians had never seen a human, why in the world didn't they reconstruct Vina to look more like themselves, you know 2 arms, 2 legs, symmetrically placed.

Who's to say that the Talosians really looked like that?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 3:05pm

You're saying they only gave the illusion of looking like that? OK, now you're freaking me out.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 3:17pm

It's telepathy. They read the chick's mind to find what she really wanted to look like, and hey presto, made it happen.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 3:32pm

Woa! What if we're all like figments of some freaky alien brain guy's imagination?

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 3:36pm

then why did they give the illusion of having buttocks on the backs of their heads?

[Reply](#)

- [Alcing Functionholic](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 3:47pm

They didn't get that "brain fart" was a metaphor.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 4:57pm

faaaaarrrt.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 5:06pm

In earlier drafts of the script, they were going to look like giant crabs, so maybe this is a bit of a leftover from that, still there after they went with the more budget-conscious option.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

2/20/09 7:24pm

What cracks me up is that one of the buttheads looks like she's actually a sweet old grandma.

'cracks" heh

[Reply](#)

- [Signor Giuseppe](#)Meander

4/18/13 3:58pm

If you were choosing what to look like, would you really pick the buttcheeks-on-the-back-of-your-head look? (as Darby pointed out four years ago)

[Reply](#)

- [Signor Giuseppe](#)ThunderLizard

4/18/13 3:58pm

She was just a *huge* Quasimodo fan...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 12:04pm

Overthinking the space-wheelchair?

I think Pike's space-wheelchair situation works, even if it doesn't entirely make sense. Anyway I regarded it as more of him being mentally zapped out than being physically crippled. I think it's just meant to be disturbing, which it definitely is.

On another note, I'm on my first run of watching all these shows and I'm surprised at how many elements I'm already familiar with via South Park.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 12:20pm

There's another great reference you already know, when Kyle is in love with the home-schooled girl, who doesn't know "what is, kiss?" Don't remember the Trek ep offhand (losing my geek skills), but they reproduce the dialogue plus the background music. Good times!

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 12:40pm

As a side note, MST3K loved quoting that line. Hearing Tom Servo use a deep, steady voice to say "what is kiss?" was one of the highlights of the show.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 2:01pm

That's the Gamesters of Triskilion episode. With the Quatloos and Checkov being sexually harassed by that huge Amazon looking woman. Good times.

And unless the actual title of the ep is "The Gamesters of Trikilion", I have lost a lot of geek cred. Other than the most popular eps, I can't seem to remember any of the ep names, which I used to have cold. Bad ST geek, bad!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 2:23pm

Ooooh, so close. It's "Triskelion." Google up if you don't want to jeopardize your cred! (And Kirk steps on the blue parts lots of times.)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 2:28pm

Yeah, he does step on the wrong part a lot. And I'm apparently not too lazy to bitch about forgetting the names of eps but too lazy to actually look them up.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 4:25pm

There's a lot of episodes with the "Show me this thing humans call love" element—I probably would have guessed the one with the Kelvans if you hadn't told me which it was.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 4:56pm

but i have no word for this new feeling brewing inside of me.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Gleeth Yurnix

2/20/09 5:53pm

I saw a nekkid picture of Angelique Pettyjohn on the web several years ago. Wearing nothing but what looked like only the actual belt and a headband used on the show.

She was pretty.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 11:22am

Freakiest moment

You could say the freakiest bit of "Menagerie" was the way Pike looked after the accident, or the huge, vein-pulsing heads of the Talosians, but for me it was the moment when Spock smiled.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)scotteb

2/20/09 1:05pm

I remember reading that in the original conception of the series, Majel Barrett's character was going to be the cold, logical one (which adds perspective to Vina calling her a "computer") and they weren't quite sure what Vulcans were going to be yet.

Besides pointy-eared.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJscotteb](#)

2/20/09 1:57pm

Yeah, that goofy grin when he touches those alien plants is just a little eerie when you consider the only other time you get to see him smile in the series is when he gets sprayed by spores and gets a little nookie.

[Reply](#)

- [mbsscotteb](#)

2/20/09 4:53pm

well they can try to explain it away at least. right?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpesscotteb](#)

2/20/09 5:50pm

Hey, man. Getting rid of your emotions takes time and effort, and the events of "The Cage" supposedly took place quite a few years before. Remember in the first movie when Spock came back after being interrupted in his study to cleanse himself of emotions, and he was a real asshole to everybody?

I just figure that Spock was a younger guy, hanging with humans, and had a tendency to bust out a grin every once in a while.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugartscotteb](#)

2/20/09 7:22pm

I did like those plants, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpesscotteb](#)

2/20/09 7:56pm

They made the same noise the transporter makes!

[Reply](#)

- [meyerscotteb](#)

2/20/09 8:10pm

Spock demeanor probably had more to do with the fact that they're on Talos IV, and the Talosians had used their mind control on him.

The entire time, Spock thought he was an Adrian Barbeaubot.

[Reply](#)

- [ehscotteb](#)

2/22/09 11:25pm

Good spot. An excellent, cheesy line!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [LevZack Handlen](#)

2/20/09 11:48am

### Balance of Terror

Yes! One of the best TOS episodes. That dialogue between the Romulan commander and Kirk was an oddly powerful one, although they should have found someone other than Spock's dad to play the role.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Lev

2/20/09 1:09pm

He wasn't Spock's dad at the time though - that came later.

In retrospect, you're right, I can't watch this without thinking of Sarek. But they surely didn't know that he'd become one of the iconic returning characters when they cast him as the Romulan Commander

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Lev

2/20/09 1:58pm

Agreed. This is a great episode, and ST certainly wasn't (and still isn't) the first/only show to recycle some of its guest actors.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Lev

2/20/09 4:54pm

law and order used jerry orbach as a guest star twice before hiring him as Lenny Briscoe.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Lev

2/20/09 5:51pm

That was Sarek's brother, Skankyklus. Romulans ain't nuttin but Vulcans, anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Lev

2/21/09 10:50pm

Until some total f-tard decided to differentiate them further by giving the Romulans bumpy foreheads in the TNG era. One of the stupidest decisions in all of Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Lev

2/22/09 4:00am

BoT was my fave ST TOS episode un til I saw 'Run Silent Run Deep'...

It still works, but it always bugs me when TV Series pretty much directly recycle other plots... Like when Welcome Back Kotter did 'Network' (I'm not kidding)...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Jehovah](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 1:22pm

### Another Icon

This episode (or at least "The Cage " part) introduced another bit of great Star Trek iconography— the sexy green-skinned chick. Seen here and then never again until "Enterprise" used them some 30+ years later but still almost as instantly recognizable as phasers and warp drive. I guess the new movie has an Orion in it too.

Amusing anecdote (i think its from Gerrold's "Making of Star Trek"): when they were doing make-up tests for the green-skinned babe they kept sending the film to the lab and it kept coming back looking normal. They tried darker and

darker shades but the returned footage always looked like the girl next door. Finally, one of the producers called the lab to see what was going on. The technician said that they kept sending him this horrible green footage which he would have to color correct and that maybe the producer should fire his director of photography.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Jehovah

2/20/09 2:07pm

No, there's an Orion girl in the gang of the guy who's escaping from some penal colony... I don't remember the episode very well but this isn't the only time there is one of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Jehovah

2/22/09 3:55am

Green BatGirl obviously had make up, colour-balancing problems as well... Someone posted a great link last week...

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 11:15am

Humor and Warmth

I am glad you have honed in on those qualities that I think made the Original Series so enjoyable. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy come off as the kind of good buddies you could kick back a few drinks with but also the ones you can rely on and want with you as you stare death in the face. If the movie gets one thing right, I hope it is the value of that friendship.

Yes! Balance of Terror is coming up! That's my favorite episode!

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/20/09 1:01pm

Right there with you on "Balance of Terror." Not my favorite, but probably Top 5.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/20/09 4:52pm

friendship and the comradery of the crew is one of the main reasons the show's been popular for 40 plus years. (or so i'd like to think)

[Reply](#)

- [eh](#)Zack Handlen

2/22/09 11:38pm

And more

I was glad to finally see the Cage, if only because it explains that annoying "and more" line that the alien says at the end of the Menagerie, which I never understood. After he says it, they just cut back to Vina and she looks good again, so what was the "more" that the alien meant?

In the original pilot, you see that she was given the illusion of Pike deciding to stay with her, which is a somewhat happier ending. For Menagerie, they used this scene instead to show Pike returning to Talos.

[Reply](#)

- [Signor Giuseppe](#)eh

4/18/13 4:14pm

Yeah, I have no idea why they didn't cut things out that didn't work as a flashback. Like that "and more" line, and continuity issues, like talking about the ship, who it represented, and its warp capabilities in ways that didn't make

sense. Yet looking at th'original, there was some great footage of th'other animals in the zoo, yet that didn't stay in? Weird...

[Reply](#)

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 1:19pm

Pretty Yeomen

didn't every ad exec in the 60's have a pretty secretary? if she wasn't a pretty young temptress she was a grizzled old wise-cracking woman. it's the law of the boss/secretary universe. it's as permanent as the animal abuse pecking order — mouse / cat / dog.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

2/20/09 5:54pm

I don't know. That yeoman in The Cage looked a little hillbilly-like to me. Maybe I remembered seeing that actress on Gunsmoke or Bonanza or something.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

2/22/09 3:48am

My 2 cents...

For my money, they enver got any more beautiful than this girl, green or not...

[Reply](#)

- [Cliffy](#)Richelieu Jr

4/13/12 2:21pm

I've started going through these TOS reviews and one of the things I've liked is that every week someone says "I think this week's guest star is the hottest Trek girl." And pretty much, every week they're right on the money.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

2/22/09 3:40am

Jesus!

Let's not forget Jeffrey Hunter as our Lord now!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Richelieu Jr

2/22/09 9:54am

"I was a Teenage Jesus"

I stole that from somewhere...

[Reply](#)

- [rini6](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/09 12:49pm

Another episode

that freaked me out as a kid.

Another one of my ?fond? childhood memories. I think I watched it just to see William Shatner. This episode seemed so serious and scary. Still, I was mesmerized.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

2/22/09 3:47am

With apologies to Beavis...

A long, ong time ago my brother and I had a classification system for identifying ST TOS episodes: By alien, ie; The Incredible Salt Vampire and this one, The Butt-Heads.

[Reply](#)

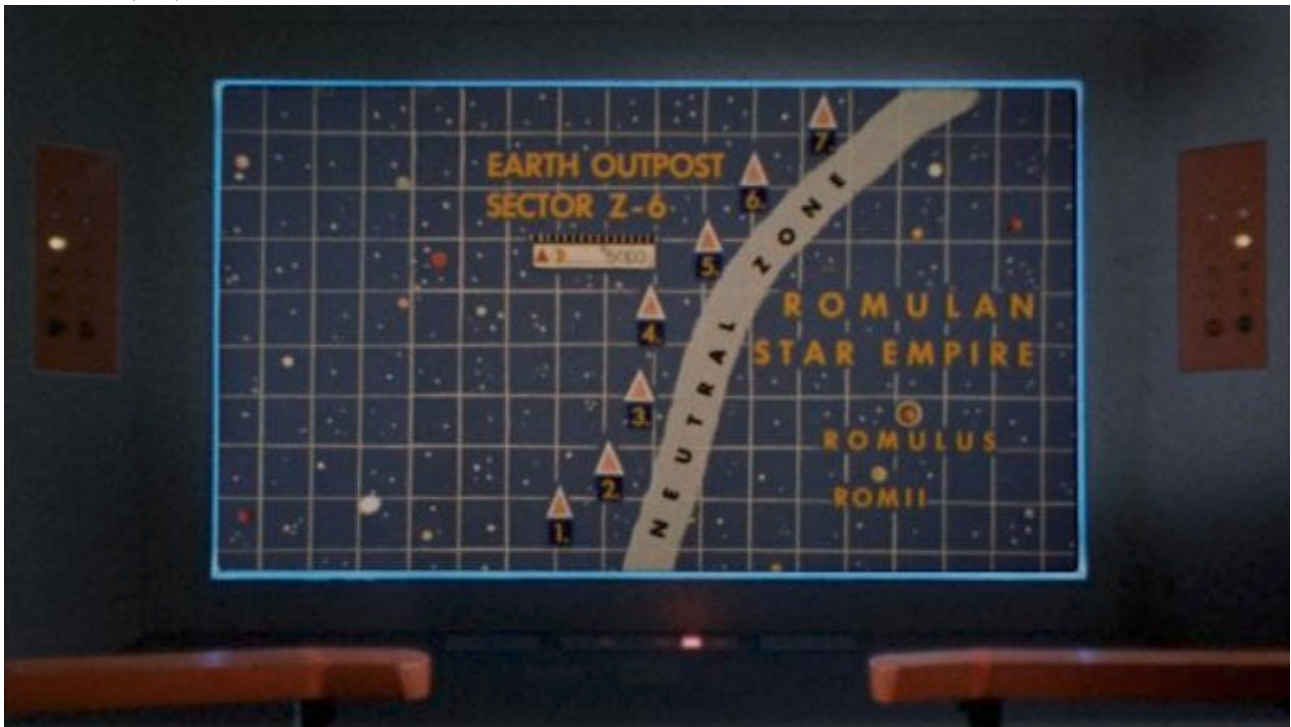


## *Star Trek*: "Conscience Of The King" / "Balance Of Terror"

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 27, 2009

[Comments \(159\)](#)



Looks like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under it.  
—*Macbeth*, Act I, Scene v

One of the best parts about revisiting the original *Trek*, at least for me, is rediscovering the episodes that I'd forgotten. Memory-wise, it's the alien-heavy stuff that tends to stick in the mind, like the Gorn and the Horta and the freaky midget Clint Howard thing. And of course I remember the iconic eps, the ones everybody remembers—once you've seen, say, "City On The Edge Of Forever," you won't be forgetting it any time soon. But a good number of *TOS* episodes rely more on transplanting standard dramatic tropes into a science fiction environment than they do on innovation alone. The week's first episode, "Conscience Of The King," takes a familiar story—the stranger who may or may not be a criminal from our hero's past—and adapts it for the needs of the series. To the bad, this means some awkward juggling with technology to keep the plot going; to the good (and it's mostly good), we get Kirk at his most conflicted and some nifty Shakespearean allusions.

"King" opens with King Duncan's murder in *Macbeth*. Kirk and a someone whose name we'll get after the opening titles are watching the play, and that someone insists that Kirk pay very close attention to the lead actor. It's not just any old man up there, reciting the classics in a booming voice—that's a very bad guy. Kirk demures, but our someone insists. The man playing Macbeth is none other than Kodos the Executioner!

Okay, here's where pop culture turns around to bite us on the ass. While *TOS* was there first, the name "Kodos" has a very different meaning for anyone who didn't see this episode when it originally aired. It's not a total mood-killer, but if you've caught a "Treehouse Of Terror" episode of *The Simpsons*, you're going to have a definite idea of what "Kodos" should look like. As such, the stinger on the cold open, which should have you thinking, "Oh my god! Who's that?" instead has you wondering if there's a giant green one-eyed squid thing hiding behind the old guy on stage in the silly costume.

Moving along—the someone making the accusations is Dr. Tom Leighton, who lied about inventing a synthetic food in order to get Kirk and his ship in orbit. (Kirk's resignation here is sort of hilarious considering what went down last week; he's gotta be wondering if he should just never answer the space phone again.) Now that Kirk's beamed down and seen "Kodos" for himself, Leighton wants the captain to take action. The Executioner was, apparently, not given the title for his aptitude with computer programs; while governor of Tarsus IV, Kodos had half of the planet's population killed. He also mucked up one half of Leighton's face. Again, I question the efficacy of the medical technology of the time, since Leighton's wandering around with a black mask over his wound that looks like it was made of velvet from a Big Lots. But the visual makes its point, and given Leighton's vehemence, I could imagine him choosing to leave the injury on display as a constant reminder of what had been done to him.

Leighton's convinced the actor, who goes by the name Anton Karidian, is the real deal, but Kirk has his doubts. Kodos is supposed to be dead, and it's been twenty years since Tarsus IV. The enormity of the man's crime is such that it demands absolute proof before going forward, proof that Leighton, despite having been one of only a handful of people left alive who'd seen Kodos face to face (well, face to some face), can't give. Still, Kirk has his wind up, and he can't let go of things until he knows for sure one way or the other. He does some research on the Enterprise refreshing himself on Kodos's crimes, and here's where the tech stuff gets tricky; the eye-witnesses are very important to the storyline as things develop, but there's also a clear photo of Kodos in the data banks. We also find later that there are recordings of Kodos's voice on file. So why do the eye-witnesses matter?

For one, it gives the bad guy someone to murder, but on a structural level, I think we're dealing with a plotline originally suited for a Western or anything in the pre-computer era. Without the files on Kodos, the witnesses become the only people who can bring him to justice; *with* the files, they're not all that necessary. Evidence can be faked, but then, witnesses can lie, and it's been *twenty years*. To go along with "King," you have to accept the basic premise that without the witnesses around, Kodos (aka, Karidian)(um, spoilers, I guess) will be scot free. It takes some swallowing. Thankfully, the rest of the ep is strong enough that you don't mind the taste. (I should probably apologize for that metaphor.)

After his research, Kirk returns to the planet to attend a dinnery party at the Leighton's with Karidian's acting troupe. It's during the party that Kirk first meets Lenore, Karidian's 19 year old daughter. He immediately puts the moves on her. Ostensibly it's because he wants to know more about Karidian, and he does ask her a few questions—questions which she artfully dodges—but it's clear his interest goes beyond professional; hell, she's blonde and willing, and our captain isn't made of steel or anything. For me, their relationship is the weakest part of the episode. "King" has two emotional through-lines: Kirk's need to *know*, and the way his feelings for Lenore confuses that need. The fact that Lenore doesn't seem all that deserving of his attention somewhat hampers the second part. She's not unlikeable, but personality wise, she's mostly just vacant glances and vapid poetry. When we get the third act reveal that she's crazy, it's not really shocking, but she doesn't have the sort of crazy-chick charisma that would've explained Kirk's fascination.

Back to the party—Kirk and Lenore go for a walk, and just happen to come across Leighton's corpse. (Given what we eventually learn about Lenore, did she intentionally bring Kirk here?) This is about as red as flags get, so Kirk decides to take action; he arranges for the Enterprise to transport the entire troupe to their next gig, presumably to give himself more time to make his decision. Spock senses something is up, and gets even more suspicious when Kirk has Kevin Riley busted down to Engineering for no obvious reason. He does his own research, and finds out that Riley is one of the last of the Kodos witnesses; and so is Captain Kirk.

Things proceed, with Kirk pumping (heh) Lenore for information and Spock talking his concerns over with McCoy. Riley gets poisoned (before which, we get another one of Uhura's numbers; terrible song, but she has a nice voice, and given the little Nichelle Nichols gets to do on the Enterprise when she *isn't* singing, I won't begrudge her the moment), but thankfully (!) McCoy manages to save him. At this point, you'd assume there wouldn't be a doubt left in Kirk's head as to Karidian's identity, but he's still struggling. This makes for a clever nod to *Hamlet* (another hero who couldn't make up his damn mind), but if that were the only reason, it wouldn't be worth the time we spend on it. Fortunately, it also makes sense character-wise. Kodos is such a monster, and Kirk's need for revenge so intense, that he becomes overly cautious for the simple fact that he can no longer trust his own objectivity. It isn't that he wants Karidian to be innocent—it's because he wants him to be guilty that he has to be beyond positive before he can make his move.

I like that, and I appreciate that it's something you have to figure out for yourself. Also interesting is Karidian himself; he only gets one big scene with Kirk before the end, but it's a good one. There was a certain level of ambiguity to Kodos's massacre—Tarsus IV had a food shortage, and by killing half the population, the governor saved the half that was left from starvation. But he *chose* who lived and who died, which is always suspicious, and the food shipments arrived earlier than expected, making the deaths meaningless. I would've liked a little more time spent on Karidian and a little less time spent hearing Lenore talk about the stars (and women); he doesn't explicitly deny his identity, and there's a sense that the guilt of his actions weighs heavy on his shoulders. That sort of thing is always fun.

It all comes to a head, as these things so often do, with a production of *Hamlet* put on for the entire crew of the Enterprise. Recovering in Sick Bay, Riley gets wind that Kodos is on board and sneaks back stage, phaser in hand; Kirk is able to talk him out of it at the last minute, leaving the captain back stage when Lenore and Karidian have their final, relevatory chat. While Karidian is definitely Kodos, it's *Lenore* who's been doing the dirty work lately, all without her daddy's knowledge, and contrary to expectations, he's not happy at the news. (Another factor that should've tipped off the authorities long ago: witnesses have been dropping like flies, and whenever one of them kicked off, Kodos's troupe was always nearby. Given that there were only eight or nine witnesses all told, surely someone would've noticed the connection?) See, Karidian's been trying to put some distance between himself and his guilt, and Lenore represented the one thing he'd accomplished that was comparatively innocent; but now that's all gone to hell, since not only is Lenore a murderer, she's a nutjob to boot. She threatens Kirk with a phaser, and launches into a semi-poetic speech about a "tomb in space"—but when she tries to kill Kirk, Kodos blocks the way, and down he goes.

That the plot of "King" could be translated with a minimum of fuss to, say, an episode of *Gunsmoke* isn't meant as a knock against it. After all, we are trafficking in Shakespeare here, and a certain universality is to be expected. It works to the ep's benefit, really—there's something here that you can connect to that lends all the futuristic trappings weight. Re-watching it, I found myself wondering most about the stuff around the edges; about what drove Lenore so thoroughly out of her mind, and just how Kirk managed to be one of those few witnesses back on Tarsus IV. That's always a good sign. Given the great Spock/McCoy dynamic we see in their scenes together, and some very credible acting from Shatner (given the weird vibe he gave off during "Miri," he was actually quite charming with Lenore), I'd say this one ranks fairly high.

Not quite as high as "Balance of Terror," of course, but that's no mark against "King"; "Terror" is one of *TOS*'s strongest, introducing us to a new alien race, as well as providing us with a very important piece of *Trek* mythology. We've also got the first appearance of Mark Lenard on the show, who would ultimately wind up as Spock's father, Sarek, in the second season. "Terror" is basically fifty minute battle between Kirk and Leonard's never named Romulan Commander, and for the majority of those minutes, the tension never flags. It's the series playing to its strengths—likeable characters in tough situations, and with no easy answer in sight.

A tip for couples: if you plan on getting married while you're a character on a television program, always make sure the marriage happens at the *end* of the episode. Sure, that doesn't leave you completely protected—there's always the dreaded two-parter to mess with your matrimonial bliss next week. But getting hitched in the cold open is asking for bad news. Dramatic law dictates things change, and if you start with the happiest moment of your life, it's only bound to go downhill from there. Even worse is when the episode you're in has some good old fashioned ultra-violence—writers are always looking for pathos-inducing victims, and there's nothing quite so tragic as bumping off a newlywed. (Or, in this case, a nearlywed.) You're better off just getting hitched in secret. At least that way no one will use you as a reminder to the audience of the cost of war.

Too bad Angela Martine and Robert Tomlinson don't know this. Or maybe they do, but they're just too much in lurve to care. "Balance" starts with their wedding, Kirk officiating, and here we see what the ceremony would look like on the Enterprise; apparently, it would look a lot like any other gathering of crew-members, only Angela puts some feathers in her hair beforehand. (Aww, Scotty's giving her away!) Starfleet must have an incredibly strict dress code—everyone's in uniform, even the groom. Just as Kirk starts in with his speech, though, the ship goes to Red Alert. The Enterprise is in the middle of checking up on a series of Outpost Bases, and they've just got the word that Outpost 4 is under attack!

Here's the set-up: over a century ago before the time of "Balance," the human race bumped into the Romulans, war-like aliens that are sort of like Klingons, except the Klingons haven't been invented yet. There was an exceptionally nasty war, with no quarter given on either side, and at the end of it, the only way to establish a lasting peace was to create a Neutral Zone between our space and the Romulans'. (Given the way space works—it being both mind-bogglingly big and confusingly three-dimensional—you have to wonder how big the Zone is. We just see it as a thick line on a map, but wouldn't it have to be some kind of a circle? Or is this like that tape-through-the-apartment gag sitcoms use. Either way, somebody got screwed, because the bathroom can't be on two sides at once.) Neither race can enter Zone without it being considered an act of war, and Starfleet isn't taking any chances; hence the Outposts. Too bad they seem to have gotten in the habit of being blown up lately.

Oh, and there's one other thing; since there were no prisoners taken during the war, and no visual contact made between humans and Romulans, neither side has ever seen what the other side looks like.

As is generally the case with this kind of plot-metaphor (fear of the unknown again rears its probably-ugly-but-we-wouldn't-know-it head), you can go two ways with this. It's an absolute, and in real life, absolutes are decidedly rare commodities. While the nature of space battles does cut down on the odds of stumbling across an enemy's corpse, practically speaking, it's hard to believe that a hundred years could go by without either race ever getting a glimpse of the other. The negotiations were made entirely over the radio? And in all the time since, nobody's tried to make contact? Given that the Outposts—and there are a lot of them—have been operating for decades now, that means there's been a substantial investment of time and money without any real attempts to resolve the situation.

But I guess that's not *that* unusual. And it does work with what we were talking about way back in the first episode; the way the inherent fragility of space travel dictates a different, more decisive approach to problem solving. For all its pretense towards civilized discourse, Starfleet is basically a very small light in a very large darkness. The main focus has to be keeping that light lit as long as possible, whatever the cost. Even putting that aside, the "unseen enemy" is still a nifty conceit, and the pay-off—that the Romulans are actually an off-shoot of Vulcan-blood, which makes our Helmsman of the Week, Mr. Stiles, not all that fond of Mr. Spock—is worth a little suspension of disbelief.

Kirk and crew quickly learn that the destroyed Outposts were blown to bits by a Romulan Bird of Prey, a ship with weapons that outclass anything Starfleet has going, and a cloaking device that makes it a lot harder to track in open space. The Enterprise finds a way, of course, but the Bird is headed home, across the Zone, and that puts Kirk in a tricky position. If he follows, he risks putting his ship in danger and, if he fails to destroy the BoP, inciting a war. But the Romulans themselves have already opened the door on the latter, and giving up now would look like weakness. McCoy preaches peace, but Kirk, being Kirk, takes the gamble: hunt the BoP down and destroy it before report back to Romulus that humankind is ripe for conquering.

Again we see old-fashioned plotting repurposed for a futurist environment, as the back and forth that ensues here is more a submarine hunt than a battle between the stars; there's a great line in *Wrath of Kahn* where Spock comments on Kahn's "two-dimensional" strategizing, but in "Balance" both commanders seem incapable of taking full advantage of the scope of the field they're playing in. You can chalk that up to the effects available at the time of filming, though, and it's a small allowance to make. Besides, the submarine is a decent metaphor for a starship; the environment it moves through is a largely hostile one, and you can't rely on visually acquiring the target before you start firing. (There's a terrific moment here when the Enterprise cuts down all non-essential functions in order to go "silent." It may be pushing the metaphor too far—I can understand shutting down equipment, but surely the whispering is unnecessary—but it works nonetheless.) The stakes are very high here, and watching Kirk out-manuever his enemy, even to the point of earning that enemy's respect, is very cool.

In addition to the battle, there's also the little morality play that develops between HotW Stiles and Mr. Spock. Apparently being a helmsman on the Enterprise is one of the highest pressure jobs around, or else Kirk likes to promote people who have story-specific vulnerable points; Stiles lost family in the original Romulan-Human war, and he's looking for blood. After the reveal that the Romulans look just! like! Spock!, he's aiming his sights close to home. (Side note: Amazing that the Enterprise can get a visual of the Romulans' bridge without the Romulans knowing it, eh?) But when circumstances put Stiles life in danger, Spock saves him and gets the job done without breaking a sweat, showing

Stiles the error of his ways. If only every minority could do the same. (I can respect economy of storytelling, but it's funny how Tomlinson gets himself killed during those same circumstances; Spock tells Stiles that he was just saving a "valuable" crew-member, so I wonder if Tomlinson, wedding plans aside, just wasn't as cost effective?) The plea for tolerance here is a little silly, but it doesn't detract from the main story, and it's nice that nobody but Stiles ever suspects Spock. I could imagine other shows trying to play up the drama, especially after Spock inadvertently breaks radio silence, but c'mon, this is Spock, the sanest man on the Enterprise. As he's already proven, if he was really working for the other side, who the hell could stop him?

By the end of "Balance," Kirk has his victory, the Romulan Commander has destroyed his own ship (after passing on the standard, "In another universe, we coulda been buddies, y'know?"), and poor Robert Tomlinson is dead. Life on the Enterprise goes on—like that small light in the big darkness, it's a fragile thing, and there's no promises everyone is going to make it through the full five year mission. But with Kirk at the helm, and Spock and McCoy at his side, at least the crew knows they'll go down fighting.

#### Grades:

"Conscience Of The King": A-

"Balance Of Terror": A

#### Stray Observations:

- I've been catching up on my *Battlestar Galactica* lately (only halfway through the second season, no spoilers plz), and it's nice to see that, dark as that show gets, the sense of family you get on the Enterprise is still going strong.
- Kirk: "What were you twenty years ago?" Kodos: "Younger, Captain. Much younger."
- Wow, the Romulan Commander's Centurion buddy has some—unfortunate make-up.
- Next week, "Shore Leave" and "The Galileo Seven."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (157)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [pierrotlegoo](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 9:59pm

As entertaining as the original Star Trek series is...

there is no doubt that The Next Generation series is the golden age of Star Trek. Any chance some reviews of that TNG will ever see the light of day? (And no, I didn't choose this avatar because of this post, that was just a happy coincidence.)

[Reply](#)

- [bkpierrotlegoo](#)

2/27/09 11:13pm

Doubt! DOUBT!

If you follow comic book terminology, you could possibly call TNG the Silver Age, but not the Golden Age: you should save that for the original flowering.

In any case, as I think Zach has pointed out, there was so little dramatic tension in TNG. The stakes always seemed low, there was little danger, and the characters on the ship had no personality flaws to generate conflict from.

Still, recaps would be fine :).

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Evan Waters](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 12:16am

I dunno, TNG was sort of the SNL of science fiction. When it was good, it was some of the best stuff on TV. When it was bad, it was PAINFUL.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 12:51am

TNG could be intelligent and funny, but I never found it fun.

Big flaw.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 1:06am

Another way it was like SNL is that they both decided it would be a good idea to give screen time to Joe Piscopo.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [pierrotlegoo](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 2:22am

Granted, TNG has isn't perfect, especially certain moments during the earlier seasons, but when the show hit its stride it was the best. Evidence:

The BORG (who posed THE greatest danger of any enemy)

Data

Worf

The death of Tasha Yar, an event that showed no character was safe (No tension?)

The two part episode where Picard becomes a borg

Picard

The list goes on.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 2:33am

Some good stuff in TNG, I'm not denying that. But I still never found myself just having fun watching it. The character interaction was often clever and cute, and the Holodeck shows were a nice excuse to revisit the silly "hey, this alien planet looks just like Victorian London!" ideas, but I still don't think it was nearly as fun as TOS.

Picard was the best element of the show, but he didn't beat the shit out of Finnegan or go skirt-chasing every other week. That stuff is just plain fun.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 2:38am

And the fact that the ship - the Enterprise, for gods sake - looked like a pregnant duck didn't help. Whoever designed that thing should have been laughed out of the room.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 6:13am

The Next Gen will always be my favorite series if only because it was the one that got me into the star trek universe. Also while you could say the characters were low energy and didn't generate conflict (what??? so we're penalizing them now because they weren't hamming it up?) the show was by far the Classiest Trek series...also i still believe of all the series, it was the least laughable, and the most accessible to non trekkies for the most part. in short it legitimized the Trek universe for non fans of TOS. (tho how could anyone NOT like TOS is a question best left unasked.)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 11:51am

Aside from Picard being the best captain ever (yes he was, you just hush), I do have to say

Seven of Nine!

Seven of Nine!

Seven of Nine!

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#) pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 1:24pm

If TNG is the golden age, then DS9 is the super-golden age. You want dramatic tension, danger, personality flaws? You got it!

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#) pierrotlegoo

2/28/09 3:12pm

yeah, i'm with hornacek - DS9 was the fuckin' pinnacle of Trek.

that said, when i re-watched the show on DVD i found myself wondering how different the series would have been if avery brooks had played sisko with the same sense of humor and recklessness he showed in the pilot, instead of almost instantly becoming all terse and serious and Mr Gravitass-y; aside from a couple of his father-son eps with jake, he really never showed any of the infectious glee he exhibited in the pilot.

that's not even really a complaint, just something i've wondered about from time to time.

plus, y'know, DS9 brought the hotties, too. to get back to the important stuff...

[Reply](#)

- [LondonDave](#) pierrotlegoo

3/01/09 2:34pm

I watched TNG as I moved from my teens to my twenties. The first two series were really bad I thought, embarrassing at times. But after the Season 3/4 cliff-hanger, it became brilliant. Some episodes were duffers alright, but the dynamic between all the characters, especially Data's ongoing quest to be human, was great to watch. Again, it was one of those series where the characters transcended the environment they habited.

I especially liked Worf when he would pull the "if I was not in Star Fleet I would kill you routine". He did it all the time, he threatened every other male on the show at some point, hiding behind Star Fleet rules.

And as the show went on it subverted itself, mixed things up and became a classic bit of telly.

Even so, I got bored by it when they visited yet another planet where the entire population lived in a village with a little fountain in the middle, and no one had cars.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) pierrotlegoo

3/01/09 4:11pm

Look, I loved TNG, but I have to agree with Udjibbom and Hornacek: DS9 owns, as far as ST spinoffs go. TNG did some great stuff in the middle of its run, but it was crippled by 2 things. 1) the insistence that all conflict has to come

from without, that even the Federation had to be more or less perfect, and 2) the insistence that every episode had to have a sci fi hook. The only episode that escapes this is "Home", the sequel to "Best of Both worlds", in which we see the aftereffects of that experience on Picard. That episode is an example of what TNG could have been.

@Pierrotlegoo: "The BORG (who posed THE greatest danger of any enemy)"  
heck, the Kelvans were a greater danger

"Data"

I like Data fine, but so what?

"Worf"

That's the guy who pointed his phaser at the screen in "Encounter at Farpoint"?

"The death of Tasha Yar, an event that showed no character was safe (No tension?)"

Well, no character who wanted out of her contract. Really, all the characters were safe.

And the episode in which Tasha Yar dies has got to be the worst episode ever (yes, "Spock's Brain", you can relax now. Sucked under by an animated oil slick.... not exactly a dramatic death!

"The two part episode where Picard becomes a borg"

Granted.

"Picard"

OK, you got me there.

[Reply](#)

- [The Great Wolf](#) pierrotlegoo

3/01/09 5:40pm

I have to go with bk over the frequent lack of dramatic tension in TNG. That's not the case with every episode, but TNG far too frequently pumped out episodes where the central crisis of the episode is a fictional problem solved by a fictional turn of science/engineering.

How many times did we have to see the Enterprise break free of some energy field or anomaly by modulating the harmonic frequency through the energy couplings or some other sort of hogwash? What did the writers expect? That I'd be on the sofa watching the show and slap my head and say "OF COURSE!" when they figure out how to get out of their jam, just wishing I'd thought of it myself?

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#) pierrotlegoo

3/01/09 7:45pm

I seem to recall one episode of TNG where the entire conflict was resolved through the careful administration of some cognitive therapy yapped out by Deanna Troi. Talk about a mirror on the times.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#) pierrotlegoo

3/02/09 11:25am

Voyager pwns all other Star Trek. RECOGNIZE.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) pierrotlegoo

3/02/09 11:30am

When in doubt, dampening fields and neutrino pulses do it every time.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#) pierrotlegoo

3/02/09 8:16pm



Only if you reverse the polarity.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 1:33pm

Neutral Zone & Cloaking Device

Two Trek tropes that were invented for this episode, and were so powerful that they lasted for the next few series.

But while I always had that same problem with the "Neutral Zone" and how it worked, actually, I always figured out that it was an issue that they had solved. It's just like the entire concept of "Empires" in space. Best to relax and repeat to yourself that it's just a show.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 1:53pm

Very nice, jim.

I don't think Star Trek ever had Star Wars' trope that the interstellar-travel-routes-must-be-mapped-before-you-can-use-them, but I suppose the Neutral Zone could work the same way. The computer tells you, don't jump here, and you don't.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 1:54pm

More to the point, it's an episodic show. They want to tell an entertaining story each week, they're not out to fashion a consistent universe. That trend came later.

[Reply](#)

- [Lev](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 2:14pm

Space is 3D, so could the Neutral Zone be a plane across one dimension? I do seem to recall The Wrath of Khan drawing it as a 3D region in the initial simulator part.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 2:28pm

I hope this is obvious from the reviews, but when I comment on this sort of thing, I don't mean it as a criticism of the episode unless I specifically say so. Obviously this is "just a show," but that does mean it isn't fun to try and follow its conclusions through to their logical ends. I consider that one of Trek's strengths—that silly as it can be, it still holds together very well.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 3:39pm

I love that you take that position, Zack. As far as "did Leonore subconsciously lead Kirk directly to her latest victim," my sense is that was a writer's goof or a necessary condensing of scenes. But that coincidence had never occurred to me before you mentioned it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)barefoot jim

2/27/09 4:06pm

Lev, the map of the neutral zone in TWOK has always been a pet peeve of mine. It's shown as a 3-d oval shape, almost like a jelly bean. logically, the neutral zone should be much wider and taller than it is deep, as it would have to stretch

far enough in two dimensions so that it would not be practical to invade by simply going around it. (also, why were there Klingons on the other side? I thought the Neutral zone was only between the Federation and the Romulans)

[Reply](#)

- [Dinobarefoot jim](#)

2/27/09 4:41pm

I always assumed that, since the galaxy is sort of a disk, containing the great majority of its matter in a relatively thin 'plane', it would be quite reasonable for maps of it to approximate its features as flat, from an 'overhead' view. This would just be an approximation for the sake of representation on flat displays, which would be the norm even in the future.

But I'm just a nerd like that.

[Reply](#)

- [mbsbarefoot jim](#)

2/28/09 6:03am

Cartography must be a booming industry in the future.

[Reply](#)

- [mbsbarefoot jim](#)

2/28/09 6:04am

also Andreas Katsulas in that Next Gen Ep involving the neutral zone rocks!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Jamesbarefoot jim](#)

2/28/09 12:31pm

What they really need is Cerebro... er, I mean the spherical stellar cartography room from Generations.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapowbarefoot jim](#)

2/28/09 8:40pm

"An iron curtain has fallen across space."

This show is from the middle of the cold war so a fortified DMZ in space is not surprising.

[Reply](#)

- [Vardulonbarefoot jim](#)

3/01/09 4:09am

Dino's right - in a small, planetary sense the universe is 3D, but all solar systems and galaxies exist along an essentially 2D plane with a slight curve to it.

Traveling between planets is a baffling ordeal that involves calculating orbits and changes based on the time of year, but traveling between star systems is basically just a matter of heading 'east', 'west', or whatever arbitrary term we wind up creating to describe direction in space.

As a result, the 2D star maps that made their way into the Next Generation make perfect sense - although they had to come up with some pretty crazy science machines to explain how they had sensors good enough that ships couldn't just fly 'over' or 'under' the various outposts along their borders.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Mebarefoot jim](#)

3/01/09 7:36pm

It was a duranium alloy curtain, to be specific.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

3/02/09 5:47am

Anon,

Yes, but relative to how wide it is...

He means: Seen from the POV of a planet, unless, I'm mistaken...

Take another look....

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

3/02/09 5:47am

Anon,

Yes, but relative to how wide it is...

He means: Seen from the POV of a planet, unless, I'm mistaken...

Take another look....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 12:56pm

Kang and Kodos

Kang and Kodos are both named after Star Trek bad guys. When you run across references like that, do you really think "Hey it's the guy from the Simpsons", or do you think "Oh, that's where that Simpsons gag is from"?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)partdavid

2/27/09 1:05pm

Little from column A, little from column B.

[Reply](#)

- [Fat old hairy white guy](#)partdavid

2/27/09 1:37pm

Don't blame me! I voted for Kodos.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)partdavid

2/27/09 1:50pm

Abortions for some, miniature Simpsons references for others!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)partdavid

2/27/09 1:51pm

C: I saw Star Trek first

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)partdavid

2/27/09 1:54pm

Abortions for some! Miniature plastic flags for others!

My entire life has been a long string of "so that's what the Simpsons were referencing" moments. I suspect that I'm not the only one.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

2/27/09 2:02pm

BTW, Zack, there was a good 20 years of TOS reruns before Simpsons aired. Plenty more people got the joke than just those who saw Trek "when it first aired." (Feeling old enough already in these rooms)

But I had forgotten that Kodos wasn't also a Klingon like Kang.

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)partdavid

2/27/09 2:06pm

See my comment in last week's Star Trek writeup. It's not just The Simpsons; Futurama and Animaniacs have given me plenty of moments like those, too. It's hard to top the time my clock radio woke me up with an account of the history of Atlanta, er, -is, as sung by folk-rock troubadour Donovan. The path from sleep to consciousness passed through the scary door that day.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)partdavid

2/27/09 3:04pm

Kang was the Klingon captain in "Day of the Dove."

For those curious.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

2/27/09 3:32pm

"This is KANG"

[Reply](#)

- [Chief Engineer](#)partdavid

2/27/09 3:51pm

A thousand throats can be cut in one night by a running man.

Or . . . something.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)partdavid

2/27/09 11:43pm

Only a fool fights in a burning house.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)partdavid

2/28/09 5:58am

i'll back Henry up and agree that sometimes my whole life does seem like its made up of moments of me saying ohhh so this where Simpsons got it from.

The Coreolis Effect!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)partdavid

2/28/09 12:35pm

While fighting in burning houses is frowned on in Klingon society, fighting on a burning planet is apparently A-OK by Captain Kruge.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)partdavid

3/01/09 7:33pm

Marty! We've got to get you back to the future!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)partdavid

3/02/09 5:51am

Anon,

Wrong again! He's named after that president guy who's named after the cat!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)partdavid

3/02/09 5:51am

Anon,

Wrong again! He's named after that president guy who's named after the cat!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/02/09 11:23am

No, he's named after 2 types of candy bars.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 2:58pm

Conscience of the King

I like the placement of CotK. You have the weird aliens of "The Menagerie" and the epic space battle of "Balance of Terror," and in between a very human story that, as Zack says, can fit in any TV series. Plus there were a lot of good full-length Spock-McCoy scenes, where we usually just have them taking shots at each other at the beginning or end of scenes. In fact, both this episode and "Balance of Terror" did a lot to establish the Kirk-Spock-McCoy dynamic of the series.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Ball](#)scotteb

2/27/09 3:39pm

One thing kind of bugs me with that dynamic in "Conscience of the King", though. Why didn't Kirk just tell Spock what he was up to? It's not like Spock would have told everyone about Kirk's suspicions and ruined his chance at exposing Kodos. If anything Spock is the one guy you can trust to keep a secret. And he had to know that Spock was going to figure it out sooner rather than later.

Also, why did Kirk think that Riley would be safer all by himself in the darkness of the engineering section? Isn't that like hiding from a maniac in a hockey mask by going skinny dipping in a haunted lake at midnight? Maybe he was using him as bait, which would be pretty fucked up.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)scotteb

2/27/09 3:45pm

Good point, BB. Like Reilly would be assassinated on the bridge.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)scotteb

2/27/09 3:50pm

That was actually another point I was going to bring up. Was Kirk trying to protect Riley, or was he using him as bait to draw out the killer?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Casterscotteb](#)

2/27/09 3:54pm

He was still pissed at Riley for almost crashing his fucking ship in "The Naked Time". You think Kirk just forgets shit like that?

"Oh, Riley, hey...what? Someone's trying to kill you that's not me? Report to engineering...in the dark section, out of Scotty's way."

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakenamescotteb](#)

2/27/09 4:09pm

Riley was perfect bait - an annoying twerp no one would miss if things went wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [tibberscotteb](#)

2/27/09 7:57pm

i always thought he moved Riley out of the way to keep him from finding about about Kodos and trying to take matters into his own hands (which of course he ended up doing.)

correct me if i'm wrong, but Riley never appeared again after this, did he?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractingscotteb](#)

2/27/09 9:38pm

That's a good point. Ol' Reilly sure was a hothead.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Jamescotteb](#)

2/27/09 11:19pm

We're past the Naked Time now, which is the only other Riley episode I know of. Though I suppose we could watch it ONE MORE TIME!

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.scotteb](#)

2/28/09 3:43am

One of my favorite scenes in CotK is when Spock confronts Kirk, and McCoy backs Spock. In any of the other series, is there a first officer who dares to confront the Captain as much as Spock does?

And I always suspected that Riley was bait.

[Reply](#)

- [mbscotteb](#)

2/28/09 6:06am

well it was a comfortable chair—if kirk was gonna be killed, i'm sure he would rather die in his comfy chair than on some dusty old planet.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractingscotteb](#)

2/28/09 11:46am

Except Reilly would have a little more backup support on the bridge than all alone... down there... in the dark.

Iiiii will take you Hooooome, KathLEEEEEEEEEEEEEEN!

(it had to be done)

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Mescotteb](#)

3/01/09 7:39pm

There was that one curved section of hallway where every creepy creature lurked or kung fu swordfight was always going on. I would have stayed away from that section.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Captain January](#)Zack Handlen

2/28/09 12:40am

Star Trek Makes Me Happy

I'll read through all the comments later — so below I may hit on some points already discussed. I just wanted to note the following:

Between Conscience of the King's Shakespeare and Balance of Terror's submarine style running silent and deep, these have to be two of Nick Meyer's favorite episodes.

And apparently BoT is a major influence on the new Abrams' film.

And just because, and I'm later than usual to the party this week and no one's gonna read my post anyway and because I love Balance of Terror, here's my slightly arbitrary Best of Original Trek list:

1. Amok Time
2. City on the Edge of Forever
3. Balance of Terror (yay!)
4. The Trouble with Tribbles
5. The Doomsday Machine
6. Friday's Child
7. Where No Man Has Gone Before
8. Journey t Babel
9. The Naked Time
10. Requiem for Methusalah

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Captain January

2/28/09 1:04am

Your first point makes a lot of sense. Supposedly, Nick Meyer had virtually no exposure to TOS, and watched all the episodes before writing the script for Khan. Maybe his mind focused on these early episodes and he knew what he wanted to do with it.

Arena didn't make the list?

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Captain January

2/28/09 6:18am

which one was the one where Kirk and Spock team up with Lincoln (who's floating in space!!!) in order to finally take down Genghis Khan in front of this giant rock monster??? (that one always gets my vote for silliest—when i used to describe it people were always so sure i made it up!)

my favorite and i think i've said it in like every one so far—All My Yesterdays. good stuff. good stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Captain January

2/28/09 6:19am

oh and i have a huge fondness for the chicago gangsta planter  
Ay we'll get you your Heaters Sir!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Captain January

2/28/09 12:01pm

Enough with all the "Apparently the new movie..." Is there any safe haven for those who aren't spoiler obsessed? It's fun reading everyone's comments (I learn a lot), but it's starting to look like I'm going to have to bail on this pretty soon, since there will only be more leaks in the months to come and more geeks who just live to ruin someone else's day.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Captain January

2/28/09 3:15pm

yeah, cap - how can you leave off Arena? as liz lemon might say," Can I get a What-what? for the Gorn?!

Never leave a brother hangin..."

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Captain January

2/28/09 9:10pm

All right — I as wrong! Arena goes on the list — despite the Malkosians' efeiminacy. It replaces Methusalah — which I still like.

And I Find Tinsel Distracting, I think it's a pretty bland spoiler that the writers of the new Abrams Trek were inspired at least in part by Balance of Terror.

I still have a soft spot for poor Lenore Karidian,

[Reply](#)

- [Vardulon](#)Captain January

3/01/09 4:16am

Ah, the Savage Curtain, one of Star Trek's looks many looks at the worst at the worst men in human history (except Hitler). Oh, the future, I can't wait for your endless succession of guys who are essentially Hitler, but more palatable for television audiences.

Also, it was nice to see Kahless before he became the Klingon Jesus/Conan

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Captain January

3/01/09 4:25pm

Hey, what happened to "Devil In the Dark" and "A Private Little War"?

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Captain January

3/01/09 6:54pm

I love A Private Little War for, equally, its trenchant JFK-styled Viet Nam analogy, Nancy Kovak's Nona in skintight black leather pants and the Mugato.

Devil in the Dark's good, too, and I love the Horta — just didn't quite make the cut.



[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Captain January

3/02/09 11:34am

CaptJam, this is a pre-emptive attempt at encouraging a separate, all-spoilers conversation on a different board. As I said, as the months go on, there will only be more and more of this. And sorry if I like to discover things during the movie instead of before. It's actually more fun that way, not less.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Captain January

6/20/14 6:58am

"And apparently BoT is a major influence on the new Abrams' film."

Wouldn't that have been great?

Not a bad top ten at all, and it's nice to see Methuselah get some applause since it's rarely ever mentioned, let alone lauded. Among ST babes, too, Louise Sorel seems entirely forgotten, for no reason that occurs to me. Friday's Child, though? Wow.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Jack Strawb

7/09/14 1:51am

Methuselah is rarely mentioned because it sucks so bad.

:-)

I think we wound up going over that pretty thoroughly, in the comments from that set of reviews — or maybe the week before.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)JimZipCode

7/10/14 2:27am

I just happened to watch it last night for the first time in a decade, and wow is my memory faulty. It's awful. The plot is ludicrous, Kirk suddenly behaves like a hormonal fifteen year old, and Spock develops magic powers at the finish.

The idea of a man who has attained practical immortality is fine, as is the crew of the Enterprise struggling against the clock. The paired ideas of falling in love with an android not knowing she's an android with her not knowing she's an android are also peachy, but the way Bixby assembles them in the script is nuts. "We have a few hours to live. Hm. Billiards, anyone?" God. Season three can make me weep.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Jack Strawb

7/10/14 7:46am

:-)

There was a guy in these comments, when we got to this one, who maintained that Kirk was insane in this episode, because he'd left his visor off as the Medusan ambassador beamed off the ship at the end of Is There In Truth No Beauty. That's a momentarily comforting thought, if only to have a concrete reason why Kirk behaves so crazily here.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 12:17pm

C of the K

I love the Shakespeare references that pop up in Star Trek. It is such a mjestically goofy fusion of the high brow and the low brow.

[Reply](#)

- [Finneas Q. Sassafrass](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 12:28pm

Shakespeare is best, of course, it its original Klingon.

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 12:28pm

Since when is Shakespeare low-brow?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 12:55pm

That's what makes Star Trek so perfectly middlebrow.

[Reply](#)

- [Grimace from McDonalds](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 12:55pm

What are the low-brow elements you refer to? You mean how Sulu's always getting kicked in the nuts?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 1:55pm

Uh, I'm pretty sure the fusion DC was referring to was between Shakes (high) and Trek (low). Not that Shakes didn't regularly play to the groundlings, though (they paid their ducats too).

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 2:42pm

What is the Earth phenomenon called...humor?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 2:42pm

That's exactly what I am refering to Tinsel. Sorry if it was unclear. I just love that characters (and more frequently episode titles) will quote some of the greatest and most enduring works of man (Shakes, Moby-Dick, Bible, Milton, et al.) as they are flying around in space ships and shooting lasers. If find it enjoyably ridiculous.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 11:30pm

I think they're pretty regular with working that stuff in during the shows, but then when Nic Meyer comes in (he wrote II,VI, and I think contributed to IV) it's just a full-on balls-to-the-wall allusion-a-thon. I say he wrote Undiscovered Country, but really, it was at least 35% Shakespeare by volume. Not that I don't love it.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/28/09 3:23am

The Original Series had some of the best titles of any series. Looking over the DVDs is like looking over a good short stories collection.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/28/09 5:49am

i always like the made up "future" classic stuff best.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 12:24pm

Best Episode?

Regardless of "City on the Edge..." and its reputation, I still think this may be the best original series story that doesn't feature a Doomsday Machine in it. It's tight, smart, and emotionally moving in a way many other episodes have to awkwardly stretch to get to. That last sequence with Kirk and Tomlinson's fiance and his final walk down the corridor to get back to the day-to-day grind — along with the tracking shot — adds a layer of gravitas that makes the episode more powerful upon re-watching. Some great camerawork, too, which will be sorely missed in later episodes as the budget drops.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)blasmo

2/27/09 2:42pm

Never thought City on the Edge of Forever was as great as its reputation. I'll take Balance of Terror, Doomsday Machine, Space Seed, The Tholian Web, The Enterprise Incident, and hell, even Arena before City.

To me, City suffers from an inexplicable plot hole. Edith dies in the original timeline when a truck hits her, but she would never have been in that place at that exact time unless she was on a date with Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)blasmo

2/27/09 3:42pm

True, though it's also got Spock assembling a tricorder peripheral out of "bear skins and stone axes".

Besides "The Tholian Web" suffers from an inexplicable Tholian web.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)blasmo

2/27/09 7:30pm

"Is there something you could make some kind of rudimentary lathe out of?"

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)blasmo

2/27/09 7:51pm

McCoy changed things when he went back in time though, right? so i don't think it's that big a plot hole, as far as time-travel stories go.

besides, what makes that episode great is the characters' reactions to what goes on, not necessarily the plot.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)blasmo

2/27/09 11:41pm

My favorite thing about Doomsday Machine is that the Crazy Captain looked EXACTLY like my dad. This was the same guy who played James Thurber in My World And Welcome To It.

[Reply](#)

- [JGabriel](#)blasmo

2/28/09 3:34am

You're Thurber's kid?

Shouldn't you be hanging out over in The New Yorker's comment section instead of here?

[Reply](#)

- [mbsblasmo](#)

2/28/09 5:51am

McCoy sure went crazy in that episode.

Thurber has a million uses! (The story of O?)

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Meblasmo](#)

3/01/09 7:27pm

William Windom. Solid character guy, also perfectly capable of doing bat nuts crazy.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tymac](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 1:11pm

Helmsman Stiles

I haven't seen this episode in a long time, but I remember wondering why it was so personal for this guy. It's not like the fight with the Romulans was yesterday and he lost a father or uncle or brother. It was a hundred years ago! Any family members who'd fought in the original Romulan conflict would've been so old that the young Stiles probably wouldn't dismissed their tales as elderly ranting.

[Reply](#)

- [alurintymac](#)

2/27/09 1:52pm

Yeah, nobody gets riled up about wars that happened a century ago.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)tymac

2/27/09 1:56pm

actually, his hate seemed like the hate some douchebag from the South would have 100 years after the civil war for "the damn Yankees" - which is appropriate since Stiles was a flaming racist.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)tymac

2/27/09 2:03pm

I thought the same thing. His family must have fostered it through the generations like the Hatfields and McCoys. (Hmmm, McCoy? Nah.)

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)tymac

2/27/09 2:37pm

I went looking and couldn't find the reference, but I could've sworn that somewhere along the way Bones said that he was descended from \*those\* McCoys...

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)tymac

2/27/09 2:50pm

Gimme back mai space turnips you cotton-picken' Romulan varmints!

[Reply](#)

- [mbst](#)tymac

2/28/09 6:01am

mmmm space turnips. so much better then those regular turnips.

what kind of pesticides do you think they use in space to keep space bugs off of the crops?

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)tymac

3/01/09 7:35pm

Actually, no pesticides are needed. Giant intelligent bugs hand-tend to the space turnips, so it's win-win.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [LondonDave](#)Zack Handlen

3/01/09 2:43pm

The Mighty Star Trek Canon Must Be Destroyed

The cinema re-boot will likely offend everyone who likes Star Trek at some point. To get over this we should think of it as another interpretation. No one thinks every version of Sherlock Holmes must strictly follow either Conan Doyle's stories, or fit in with Basil Rathbone's interpretation.

TV has produced some wonderful characters and scenarios over the years. It's time to think of these characters in the same way we think of Dracula say: we can make him for our own time.

If Start Trek fans were so keen on canon they wouldn't have given TNG the time of day, or the films.

And TOS couldn't give shit about continuity or canon either. As Clive James wrote, concepts that were impossible one week (time travel say) were humdrum the next, and impossible the week after.

Let's tell stories.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)LondonDave

3/01/09 4:18pm

I'm with LondonDave here. Let's shoot the canon out a cannon! Start Trek all over again!

(that's what "Start Trek fan" means, right?)

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)LondonDave

3/01/09 7:48pm

I got no problem with it. But I've been looking for an Old Testament reboot for ages now, too.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)LondonDave

3/01/09 10:06pm

Hmm... i read that initially as "I've been looking for an Old Testament robot for ages now,"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)LondonDave

3/02/09 5:09am

"First taketh the the dilithium crystal, next attacheth it thou to the sentient interface.. toucheth no the 'on' switch , lest thine robot snuff it..."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)LondonDave

3/02/09 5:09am

"First taketh the the dilithium crystal, next attacheth it thou to the sentient interface.. toucheth no the 'on' switch , lest thine robot snuff it..."

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)LondonDave

6/20/14 6:55am

"Let's tell stories."

As regards the reboot, we're still fucking waiting.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Jack Strawb

7/09/14 1:52am

He was right about the reboot containing something to offend everyone.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Jack Strawb

9/05/14 3:50pm

And I should say, I don't give TNG the time of day, or the movies except for Khan.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [texasannie](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 5:25pm

Weddings in uniform

I think it makes sense that the crewmembers wear their uniforms at their wedding. Most members of the military wear their dress uniforms in their weddings or other formal occasions. If both people getting married are military, they'd both be in uniform. Where was the bride going to get a wedding dress anyway? Kang's Intergalactic Bridal Shoppe? I guess Starfleet abandoned the idea of dress uniforms for an "all pajamas, all the time" wardrobe, kind of like at my house.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)texasannie

2/27/09 7:28pm

But at least dress uniforms?

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)texasannie

2/27/09 7:34pm

Starfleet really should have adopted Betazed's wedding dress code policy.

[Reply](#)

- [mbst](#)texasannie

2/28/09 6:09am

all pajamas all the time is what the enterprise after dark is for.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)texasannie

2/28/09 8:46pm

The show didn't have money from dress uniforms. They ran a sweat shop and slipped the uniforms in passed the union wardrobe department to save some money.

We talk about the cheesy sets, but its amazing what they did with very little money.

[Reply](#)

- [The Great Wolf](#)texasannie

3/01/09 5:21pm

Dear Sir Poodlesnort:

That is the most painfully adolescent and geeky Star Trek in-joke precisely because it's something I would have said myself about 15 years ago. Thanks for reminding me what loser I was, asshole.

By the way, what's your source on all the reboot spoilers you shared, anyways? For my part, I would have just accepted a reboot as a reboot and said to Hell with the continuity. Which, at the very least shows how much I've progressed in the last 15 years.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)texasannie

3/01/09 7:40pm

What did they wear if they just wanted to get in on some 24th Century shacking up?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 12:15pm

Love it

Balance of Terror is my favorite episode because there is a real humanity to it. I love the wedding opening because it is a glimpse of every day life on a star ship and it connects us in the present to the future. I love the scene of Kirk confessing his insecurities to McCoy because there is so much compassion and intimacy to it. I love Kirk terseley comforting the widow at the end and going back to his bussiness. I love the not-fully-explained conflict on the Romulan ship which conveys that everyone has their own story, even if we don't see it. And the commander's last line gets me every time...

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 12:34pm

Nerd note: Kirk's speech during the wedding is used by every other Captain/C.O. who performs a marriage in the later series.

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive Deleted](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/27/09 8:31pm

I just enjoy that Angela Martine gets over her fiancée's death so quickly. Next week on "Shore Leave" she's cozying up with Lieutenant Rodriguez.

Perhaps it's too nerdy of me to know that.

[Reply](#)

- [JGabriel](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/28/09 3:29am

She's not 'over' his death. She's just a young widow in need of consoling.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/28/09 5:47am

was Lt. Rodriguez unexpectedly found with his shirt off? if so that could explain Angela's feelings.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/02/09 5:58am

Is 'consoling' when you do it on the console?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/02/09 5:58am

Is 'consoling' when you do it on the console?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [ChicJanowicz](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 3:41pm

Editing

"scot free" not "scott free"

"weighs heavy" not "ways heavy"

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)ChicJanowicz

2/27/09 4:44pm

yeah, but he gets point for not writing "could of."

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)ChicJanowicz

2/27/09 7:27pm

KHAAAAANNNNNNNN!

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)ChicJanowicz

2/27/09 11:47pm

"Scott Free" = Mister Miracle.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)ChicJanowicz

2/28/09 6:07am

Mister Miracle sounds like it should be the name of a christian rock band.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)ChicJanowicz

3/02/09 11:26am

O.M.G! And I thought I was a hopeless nitpicking snark! At least I have the guts to log in when I do it.

\*smugly pats self on back\*

[Reply](#)



Hide replies

- [JGabriel](#)Zack Handlen

2/28/09 3:22am

Holocaust

"For one, it gives the bad guy someone to murder, but on a structural level, I think we're dealing with a plotline originally suited for a Western ... "

A Western? Jeepers, Zach, how blind can you be?

"Conscience of the King" is obviously placing a quite real moral dilemma of the 50's and 60's into an S/F context. Remember, like Kodos's crimes in Star Trek, the holocaust had happened 20 years earlier. Capturing and prosecuting Nazi era war criminals was a fresh memory for many, and a still ongoing project.

Saying the plotline seems "originally more suited to a Western" just comes off as all kinds clueless.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)JGabriel

2/28/09 6:19am

but what about the eventual Nazi Germany planet episode two years later huh?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)JGabriel

2/28/09 9:12am

If you're going to call me blind, it helps if you spell my name right.

I think you're right—the Nazi context does make a lot of sense—but I was more interested in commenting on the way the technology in the story seemed to make for an awkward fit.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JGabriel

3/02/09 5:11am

The basic conceit, of course is the 'play's the thing' bit in Hamlet, once again using a play to trap a confession or sign of guilt from the suspected wrongdoer, in that case an, erm, King....

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/02/09 6:00am

'Updated' Episodes

What's the deal with these?

I've heard them mentioned, but what's been changed?

Any horrible errors?

Improvements?

IF I had to buy only one of the DVDs to get an idea (I already have the complete series) which should it be?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Richelieu Jr

3/02/09 4:52pm

They've re-done all of the exterior shots of the Enterprise and the planets she orbits with CGI, as well as some of the other special effects such as the matte shots, phasers, other ships, etc. Personally, I really like them. I know some purists like the old style, but as another poster put it a couple of weeks ago, they didn't make the Gorn fire the bamboo cannon first. And the rocks are still styrofoam!

They're also re-mastered in HD. If you've got a local station broadcasting them in HD I'd highly recommend taking a look.

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 1:08pm

Because someone had to say it...

More like Episode Nine, losers! Ha ha! Ha ha! Ha ha!

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Bakken Hood

2/28/09 6:00am

Ah Ah Ah Ah... Table Five.. Table Five...

Ah Ah Ah Ah Table FIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIAAAhHHIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIIVVVVEEEE... Table Five... Taable Five...

Heey!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 2:29pm

A little difference

After the first time, every reference to Tarsus IV becomes Talos IV. I blame the lazy writing and production order of over 40 years ago.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Optramark

2/27/09 3:40pm

Yeah, I caught that too. Zack still has Menagerie on the brain. :-)

[Reply](#)

- [Eli Jah Rasta](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 5:18pm

Movies

Will your recaps of TOS be extended to the six original cast films, as well? Plz say yes.

[Reply](#)

- [mbs](#)Eli Jah Rasta

2/28/09 6:08am

perhaps you should've given him a box to check instead.

[Reply](#)

- [Don Marz](#)Zack Handlen

2/04/16 5:20am

I came looking for this ancient review after catching "Balance of Terror" in re-runs.

Glad I wasn't the only one who thought it mature of the show to make Stiles look like a weirdo not just to the audience, but to the other characters. Lazy TV drama series scripts from just after the birth of the medium right up to the present day have depended on one main character getting accused of something ludicrous & another main character suddenly transforming into a paranoid bigot, as goofy, oddly-framed scenes turn the episode into a game of guessing how they'll explain away things that obviously didn't happen the way they were shown to the audience. Better shows than this one have fallen victim to it.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/02/09 6:00am

'Updated' Episodes

What's the deal with these?

I've heard them mentioned, but what's been changed?

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[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/16 10:36pm

I'm glad I'm the first person in 7 years to comment on the Who Framed Roger Rabbit? reference. Judge Doom: "And he talked just! like! thiiiiiiiiis!"

[Reply](#)

- [feitclub](#)Zack Handlen

2/27/09 5:12pm

Proper Credit

The man's name was Mark LENARD, not "Leonard." Apparently it was a stage name, according to Wikipedia.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/02/09 4:53am

Good one?

"Scot free"... and he's in MacBeth, eh? cute!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/02/09 4:53am

Good one?

"Scot free"... and he's in MacBeth, eh? cute!

[Reply](#)

- [try the veal its the best in t](#)Zack Handlen

8/18/13 12:20am

Picard would never say, "Why me?"

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Shore Leave" / "The Galileo Seven"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 5, 2009

[Comments \(146\)](#)



I used to love the holodeck. The episodes of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* that focused on it were always my favorites; just the idea of some magical machine that let you play around in whatever fictional environment suited your fancy seemed, to my ten year-old mind, unbelievably exciting. It still kind of does. But the more you think about the concept, the more absurd it becomes. I mean, considering the number of times the 'deck malfunctioned, surely it would've been easier just to shut down completely. Every other week the safety protocols broke down, or an AI was inadvertently created capable of taking over the entire ship, or somebody would stumble across the creepy wish-fulfillment fantasies of another crew-member and things would get—awkward. (I'm looking at you, Barclay.) Picard always managed to set things right somehow, but given the number of ships in the Federation, I'm willing to bet not everyone was so lucky. ("Hmmm. There's been some racial tension between the Vulcans and the Ferengi lately. I know, we'll recreate Hitler to teach everyone a valuable lesson about prejudice. What could possibly go wrong?")

Still, it's a nifty idea. And as "Shore Leave" proves, in isolation, it can make for a mighty entertaining episode. Sure, the subtext is a little creepy, and common sense raises all sorts of questions as to just what the hell is going on, but if we were heavily invested in common sense, we wouldn't be watching a series about a paramilitary organization that dresses all of its female officers in minis and matching bikini bottoms.

Speaking of which, new Yeoman this week! Rand must be off getting her hair done (takes space-weavers a full week to get it set properly); standing in for her is a brunette by the name of Barrows. She gives out drinks and back-rubs like a pro, which is a lucky thing for Kirk. He's been feeling the strain of command lately, and in truth, everyone on the ship (apart from Mr. Spock) is stressed and in the need some good old fashioned R & R. Thankfully the Enterprise just happens to be orbiting around a new planet with a human-friendly atmosphere, gorgeous plant life, and no tricky animal life to harsh anyone's buzz. McCoy and Sulu are doing a quick survey, and both men are absolutely delighted at what they've found. It's like Heaven minus the snakes, and just what the good doctor ordered. Sulu wanders off to get some clippings from the local flora, and that's when a giant white rabbit shows up. McCoy does a goofy double take, the rabbit does a familiar "I'm late!" routine, then bounds off; seconds later, a little blond girl the spitting image of Lewis Carroll's Alice passes by. Things have just gotten weird.

"Leave" operates like a short story; one excellent twist aside, it's all first act until the final reveal. We follow a handful of characters down on the planet (McCoy, Sulu, Kirk, Barrows, and new faces Rodriguez and Angela) as each of them is charmed or menaced by something bizarrely familiar that couldn't possibly be what it looks like. Each character wonders what the hell is going on, but is either so overcome by the mystery or by the immediate danger that mystery puts them in, that they fail to recognize the obvious connection: whenever anyone thinks about a person or thing for too long, that person or thing immediately appears in front of them. (Thankfully, nobody thinks of J. Edgar Hoover *or* Mr. Stay Puft.)

And the things these people think up! Beyond McCoy's fondness for the classics, we've got Sulu manifesting a yen for old school fire-arms and samurai. (Given that the gun comes first, it would've made more sense if he'd been thinking about cowboys or cops, but whatever.) We've got Rodriguez thinking about tigers and fighter planes from World War II. We've got Kirk remembering the sonofabitch who used to torment him back at the academy, as well as an eerily baby-faced lost love named Ruth. And we've got poor Barrows conjuring up Don Juan, who immediately tries to rape her. Kirk's fantasies are essentially harmless (Finnegan's annoying, but the epic fist fight they get into is more cathartic than painful), but that's some dark shit from the rest of the group. The assault on Barrows alone is nasty enough even before McCoy gets a lance through the chest; given what we ultimately learn about the planet and the purpose it serves, you have to wonder just how much truly dark shit used to go down when the place was doing peak business.

But yeah, about McCoy getting killed—that's a shocker, no question, and it does a great job of breaking up the episode's somewhat repetitive structure. While the various fantasies we see play out are imaginative enough, it gets tedious watching what's essentially the same thing happen over and over again, especially since it's hard to imagine anyone not figuring out the twist these days. The crew-members inability to reach the logical connection between thought and manifestation is pretty hilarious. (Of course Spock gets it immediately, but then, that's kind of his thing.) McCoy's death makes everything seem much more serious. That it's shrugged off at the end with no more explanation than a punchline is too bad, but hey, it's not like they were *really* going to kill him.

Once Kirk beats the tar out of his feelings of inadequacy and Spock puts the pieces together, it's a simply matter of blanking everyone's mind to flush the ringleader of the afternoon's events out into the open; a kindly white-haired gentleman who tells our heroes that a.) this is all for fun, didn't you know that and b.) you're not ready to know who we are or how we do what we do, which saves the writer having to actually explain anything beyond the standard "Aliens can do anything!" line. McCoy is returned good as new, along with Angela, who earlier got shot by a passing plane (serves her right, really; her fiancée barely in the space-ground and she's already got a new beau), and everybody has a hearty laugh about everything. Spock returns to the ship (I love the little bit he does with the cabaret girl who attaches herself to his arm), and Kirk orders the landing parties to start beaming down so everybody can have a gay old time. But, as is so often the case with *TOS*, certain questions remain. Like, just how psychologically healthy is it to spend your time with a phantom simulacrum of an old lover? And stranger still, if the beings who run this planet have equipment sophisticated enough to read what a person is thinking about, why did it take them so long to realize that the Enterprise crew wasn't in on the joke? Either somebody was asleep at the wheel (maybe the staff were all in stasis?) or—and here's my theory—they were just bored as hell, and decided to fuck with the idiot humans to pass the time.

Whatever the motives, "Leave" is a lot of fun, campy enough that you can overlook some of the sillier plot elements, and with a strong hook to keep the camp from descending into self-parody. "The Galileo Seven" has got nearly as strong a hook, but I'm sure I'd use the word "camp" to describe it; I definitely wouldn't use the word "fun." This one's a mixed bag, and I'm not sure how much of that is flawed writing, and how much is just me really not seeing Spock proven wrong. "Seven" comes dangerously close to one of my least favorite thematic debates, the "Head or Heart?" conundrum. There's nothing inherently wrong with the question itself; as human beings, trying to figure out how much emotion and how much logic to apply to any given situation is something we have to struggle with our whole lives. What gets on my nerves is that nearly every time the issue gets raised in pop culture, we're *always* supposed to come down on the soppy side of things. Whenever a character approaches a problem with their intellect, nine times out of ten the lesson we learn is, the more you think, the less you know.

"Seven" starts out promisingly enough, with Enterprise coming across the Murasaki 312 anomaly, a giant floating green

cloud in space that causes havoc with the ship's instruments and represents a tremendous opportunity for study. While currently tasked with delivering life-saving medicine to a colony hit hard by the plague, Kirk is willing to spare a few hours time to follow his standing order of scientific exploration; we're supposed to think this is reasonable, as the only person who thinks it's *unreasonable* is Galactic High Commissioner Ferris, who just happens to be a complete dick. When it comes to medicine that can stop a plague, one would think that speed be the first thing on everyone's mind, but I guess the timing is different with space plagues. Anyway, Kirk makes the call, so I can dig it.

Spock goes out to take a look around in the Galileo, one of the Enterprise's shuttlecraft; he brings McCoy, Scotty, and a few random crew-members along for the ride. McCoy and Scotty seem like odd choices, in much the same way that Kirk's insistence on beaming down when there's even a hint of trouble to be found does. It's possible that a medic and an engineer could come in handy on a scientific expedition, but surely Scotty at least has subordinates he could send along? When the shuttlecraft goes missing, we spend part of the episode watching Ferris begrudge Kirk the time he spends searching for it, but since his First Officer, Head Doctor, and Chief Engineer were all aboard at the time of the disappearance, Kirk doesn't really have a choice.

The Murasaki effect ruins everyone's day, forcing the Galileo into a crash-landing on the nearest planet, and effectively stranding the seven people inside. (Just like the title! Clever.) Spock, being the highest ranking officer around, takes command, and trouble starts almost immediately. See, Spock is *logical*, and that means he's cold and heartless and generally not a very likable guy. McCoy has been riding him for as long as the show's been on, and for once he's not alone; most of the seven spend the episode split between shock at Spock's supposed heartlessness, and enraged at same. Scotty determines there's been a serious power drain of the ship's energy reserves, and it'll take some doing to get them back into space; specifically, it'll take the loss of 500 pounds. This leads to a discussion about who gets left behind, with Spock saying he'll make the most "logical" choices, and McCoy and Lieutenant Boma not being particularly happy with the assertion.

While Scotty fiddles with the engines, Spock sends two spare crewman, Latimer and Gaetano, out to stand guard. This resulted in Latimer getting a gigantic spear through the back, confirming for everyone on the Galileo that they are not alone, and that the inhabitants of this particular chunk of rock are apparently giant, supremely pissed off cave-man. (Of all the places to crash on, they have to hit the Planet of the Eegahs? Hope they keep an eye out for snakes.) Here's where the battle between intellect and instinct really gets going, as the crew is urging for an immediate retaliatory attack on the Eegahs, while Spock, who abhors unnecessary loss of life, would rather figure out an approach that didn't result in more death. Since Spock is in charge, he makes the final call; he, Boma, and Gaetano take a quick trip into enemy territory, lay down a brief phaser light show, and then skedaddle back to the shuttlecraft. To Spock's mind, this will frighten the cavemen off, and give Scotty the time he needs to finish his work.

Thankfully, Scotty has come up with a plan—by draining the energy out of the crew's hand phasers, he can give the Galileo just enough fuel to get back into orbit and hopefully attract the Enterprise's attention. At this point, Kirk could use the help; despite his increasingly desperate (and largely futile) search efforts, he hasn't made any progress, and Ferris continues to remind him of his obligations elsewhere. The somewhat arbitrary deadline here gives us some suspense, but like so much of the episode, it's pretty unpleasant to watch. Ferris himself is remarkably unsympathetic; while his desire to get medicine to the sick is laudable, his insistence that Kirk desert his men is, well, dick. Mostly it's just the way the actor plays it—the guy actually smirks when the Galileo goes missing.

That dickishness is my biggest problem with "Seven," because it's not just restricted to the bridge of the Enterprise. The debates that Spock, Boma, and McCoy engage in are rough going, regardless of their philosophical implications, and seeing Spock turn out to be wrong—his "logical" approach to the caveman problem winds up getting Gaetano killed—makes Boma's seething fury a lot harder to ignore. Spock's utter bafflement at his failure doesn't make much sense, either. He's been doing what he does for over a decade at this point, surely he would've realized by now that people don't always behave logically? Using your brains to work through a problem doesn't mean assuming everybody else thinks exactly like you. (Although given Spock's repeated astonishment at nearly every human emotional response, maybe this is just a blind spot for him.)

Of course, the humans don't come off all that swell either. In addition to his obvious resentment of Spock, Boma also

has the genius idea of having funerals for not one but *both* of the dead crewmen. I can sympathize with his desire to put Latimer in the ground; despite the recent discovery of nearby hostiles, Latimer's death happened far enough away from the Galileo that holding a brief service could be considered at least somewhat safe. Of course, that's not taking into account the necessity of speed in the shuttlecraft repairs, but Boma doesn't seem to be helping much there anyway. The really stupid bit comes when Gaetano dies, and Boma wants to bury *him* too. At this point, you've got the giant cavemen coming at you full bore (well, "giant" seems somewhat relative here); having everybody stand around outside just to mouth a few words to a corpse that's well past the point of hearing them is both selfish and stupid. Even worse, Boma is up in arms when Spock points out this obvious fact.

In the end, though, it's Spock's rationality that takes the hardest hits. In addition to his screw-up with the initial attack, he also orders the rest of the crew to leave when he gets pinned under a boulder during the Eegahs' last assault. On the one hand, this proves he's committed to his beliefs; on the other, it shows how the humans, who put their feelings above their common sense, are willing to risk themselves and save his life without losing anyone else. (Spock's "Go on without me!" looks particularly foolish given that he's no more than five feet away when he starts yelling it.) And the ultimately coup de grace comes when the Galileo rises into space and Spock chooses to jettison and ignite their remaining fuel as a last ditch attempt to get the Enterprise's attention. It's a desperate move, and, according to McCoy, a "human" one; something which the bridge crew is all too willing to rub in the half-Vulcan's face once everyone is back home safe. (Nice to see they all got over the deaths of Latimer and Gaetano so quickly.) "Seven" raises some interesting issues, but the fight comes off as fixed from the outset; and there's not a lot of thrill in watching a fixed fight.

#### Grades:

"Shore Leave": A-

"Galileo Seven": B

#### Stray Observations:

- "I, for one, do not believe in angels." Oh, but Mr. Spock, they believe in *you*.
- Barrows wants to be a fairy tale princess, McCoy wants to make time with hottie cabaret chicks, and Sulu likes samurai. Too bad Riley didn't beam down, we could've had Warwick Davis go apeshit on everybody.
- The mannequin inside the Black Knight armor that kills McCoy is really, really freaky looking.
- Next week, the Enterprise battles Liberace and the Gorn in "The Squire Of Gothos" and "Arena."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (146)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 11:17am

The holodeck

The show alluded to this (it was more explicit on Deep Space Nine), but I assume the holodeck was used mainly by crew members trying to get their rocks off. I've known people who have served on submarines, and I assume the Enterprise, in all its forms, is a similar model: Confined environment of young men and women, isolated from society for months or years at a time. Tension rises in those situations, and Federation might have approved the holodeck as a stress release.

Picture it: A red-blooded 20-year-old male locked in a ship in the middle of nowhere, forced by regulations to not take an interest in your female colleagues, presented with a magic box that can do anything. I think it would be used less for performing plays that allow an artificial intelligence to become human, and more for fukkin'.

[Reply](#)

- [timprovphilly](#)The Elusive Robert Denby



3/06/09 11:38am

Me and one of my girlfriends had a talk about that (it was after the Barkley episode cause you know he fracked the Holodeck Troi at some point) and I said there should be some regulation in Starfleet where a person was notified if someone on a holodeck asked for a hologram of them.

Also, if you have sex with a hologram and you're married, is that cheating? I said it was more like masturbation, she said it was cheating.

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 11:40am

Pity the janitor who got holodeck cleanup duty.

"Hello Milton how's it goin'? Yeah, I'm gonna need you to go ahead and take this ion powered splooge mop down and clean out the holodeck, OK. Thank you Milton."

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 11:44am

I recently rewatched the TNG episode where Riker falls in love with holodeck chick. The weirdest part of the episode was how normally it was treated.

Picard walked in on them sucking face, and instead of berating Riker, like I was expecting, seemed to think it was great.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 11:56am

I do love that TNG brought up the whole idea of "Holodiction." That would totally be me.

My friend brought up the disturbing concept that after you fuck a holochick, then turn her off, wouldn't your spoooge suddenly splat to the floor? Ewwwww. Imagine after a holo-orgy...

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 12:17pm

There was also the sleazy brothel planet of Risa that allowed Starfleet folks to catch the occasional dose of "shore leave."

[Reply](#)

- [Pontifex](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 12:55pm

"Shore leave," in this context, meaning "space chlamydia."

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 1:11pm

And what sound does the tricorder make when it diagnoses the space clap?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 1:26pm

The classic "wolf whistle."

[Reply](#)



- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 3:18pm

I was thinking more of a sizzling sound. Like bacon.

Also, to our fine AV Club writers: \$5 to the first person who works "space chlamydia" into a story.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 3:42pm

I ordered the Intergalactic Oysters, but they served me the Space Chlamydia by mistake.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 4:57pm

Elector-Gonorrhea, the noisy killer.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 4:57pm

Dammit, I meant 'Electro!'

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 5:13pm

i always liked that one time on TNG where Wesley got pissed at Geordi and pointed out that he could only get women on the holodeck.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/06/09 8:57pm

Also, Worf's dating advice to Geordi, "or you can beg, like a human." Hah!

[Reply](#)

- [LazarouMonkeyTerror](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 6:05am

Worf doesn't beg, he just takes.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 10:27am

I imagine the guy who has to mop up the Holodeck as a kind of Travis Bickle character, complaining of the different effluents he's got to sponge up after other people's parties...

That guy's gonna snap, mark my words...

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 10:35am

Holy crap. I'm supposed to be proctoring a writing competition here and you guys are cracking me up! "Space chlamydia," jeez. I'm gonna bust a gut holding it in.

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 2:57pm

I laughed so hard at this thread that I got the hiccups.

[Reply](#)

- [Fictional Strumpet](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 6:21pm

I thought the holodeck turned particles into matter, then matter back into particles at the end—so spooge would just be reduced to particles at the end. Of course those same particles would then be reassembled into matter the next time someone used it, though not necessarily as spooge.

So the cumulative effect is that eventually all matter on the holodeck is comprised of spooge particles.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/07/09 7:57pm

FS, that's about the hardest I've ever laughed at a post, you remorseless trollop!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/08/09 10:07am

I can't proctor right now; I've got the space herps...

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/08/09 5:15pm

"...I said there should be some regulation in Starfleet where a person was notified if someone on a holodeck asked for a hologram of them."

They probably did - that's why they were so shocked by what he did. Not to mention that socially, it was plain old distasteful.

After all, if anyone could beat those regs, it would be Barclay.

[Reply](#)

- [best commenter](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 8:04pm

oh, I'd have a hollow dick alright.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Rex](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 10:53am

The TV series  
pales in comparison to the film adaptations.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Rex

3/06/09 11:03am

Maybe, but when you consider the difference in budgets and time constraints between the two, the TV series wins hands down.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Rex

3/06/09 11:16am

Plus the camp value. I really doubt Star Trek would have survived until the first movie without the campy fun of it. I mean, honestly, when I was 10 it was freakin' awesome!

[Reply](#)

- [HenryRex](#)

3/06/09 11:42am

C'mon, Rex, don't taunt the nerds.

[Reply](#)

- [HenryRex](#)

3/06/09 4:19pm

FINE I CAN'T HELP IT.

The movies never captured the easy sense of fun of the show. They were darker, slower, maybe more self-important.

Plus, they were action movies. The show always had it's ridiculous action scenes, but the heart of the show is great characters standing in a room talking. Think of how many episodes revolve around some kind of judiciary proceeding.

The movies are good, I just don't have the same fondness for them that I do for my favorite episodes of the show.

[Reply](#)

- [alurinRex](#)

3/06/09 4:57pm

Also, in the show, generally the Enterprise goes to a planet and meets some strange new life form. Like Prohibition-era gangsters, nazis, communists, romans, or silicon-based burrowers. That is to say, they seek out and explore blah blah blah. In the movies, by contrast, they just Save The Galaxy (or at least the Federation, or at least Earth) over and over again. Super aliens threatening Earth, galacto-politics, and so forth. they almost never discover anything, except that Mary Sue in ST IV. That's why the movies aren't as much fun.

that and the pounds they all put on...

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive DeletedRex](#)

3/06/09 8:06pm

The actors also had a better rapport in the TV series, particularly in the first season. You might even be fooled into thinking they tolerated each other! By the time the films rolled around it's fairly obvious that Jimmy Doohan and Nichelle Nichols would gut Shatner like a fish if they could.

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlettRex](#)

3/07/09 12:52am

I don't know about Nichols, but Doohan and the guy who played Sulu hated Shatner. I love Shatner, and I really don't care. I loved him as Capt Kirk, and I loved him again in Boston Legal, where he was just hysterical. How do we know that Takai (not sure of spelling) and/or Doohan aren't the big pricks?

[Reply](#)

- [HenryRex](#)

3/07/09 3:00am

All I know is, I saw Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner hanging out together socially. I don't think I could spend that much time with a group of people and get along with all of them.

Hell, I know that I don't love all of my coworkers right now.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Rex

3/07/09 10:22am

IMHO there are only two good films and many great episodes.

to wit (Khan and First Contact)

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Rex

3/07/09 10:29am

Takai kind of sounds like the prick to me. I mean, refusing to take part in a movie because your CHARACTER hadn't been promoted!?!? Dude, you're an ACTOR!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Rex

3/07/09 11:32am

RJ, I concur completely, with some love for III as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Rex

3/08/09 7:03am

Not to denigrate this comment thread, but how did a troll get firsties?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Rex

3/08/09 2:06pm

"IMHO there are only two good films and many great episodes. to wit (Khan and First Contact) "

I tend to agree, with some love for VI. Given the large budgets and time between productions, all the movies should be good. But 1/3 is not a good ratio.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Rex

3/09/09 7:53am

Well, at any rate, they're the only one's I'd recommend to non Trekkers.

[Reply](#)

- [Rex](#)Rex

3/09/09 1:47pm

If I'm not mistaken, the TV show came... FIRST.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 12:13pm

Equipment Malfunctions

The way I see Star Trek, about 80 percent of the shows had to do with some kind of equipment malfunction. Either the malfunction or breakdown of the equipment directly endangers everybody, or a fucked up machine threatens to leave them exposed to another threat.

With all of its gee-whiz sci-fi technology, I always saw Star Trek as a kind of anti-technology show, with human (or alien) spirit and pluck always having to save the day when the equipment screws up.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 12:22pm

I know that the writers that created DS9 wanted to show technology messing up a lot more often, mainly because they saw the other Trek series as showing it to be almost near-perfect. But I agree with you, for as far into the future as we are, shit just keeps seeming to break down at the worst times. You have to wonder how big a bureaucracy the Starfleet Tech Support is.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 1:05pm

I would explain it by pointing out that the Enterprise deals with more of the unknown than most of the Federation, so their rate of malfunctions would be quite a bit higher than what you'd normally see in the day-to-day Star Trek universe.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 1:34pm

From a purely dramatic standpoint, a broken down bit of equipment is a cheap way to introduce a ticking clock into the narrative. The blah-blah is going to blow up in approximately 3 hours, and it's going to take just about that length of time to fix the engine or transporter or whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 1:56pm

Scotty is so long-suffering. I remember all through Galileo 7, Spock and McCoy are bickering and he's just working his ass off the entire time and he never says boo. Seriously, how many times has he pulled their fat out of the fire?

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 3:41pm

My all-time favorite Scotty moment was actually during TNG, when he shows up after being stuck in a transporter buffer for 70-odd years. It was in an exchange with LaForge:

LaForge: I told the captain we would have this realignment done in three hours.

Scotty: How long will it really take you?

LaForge: THREE HOURS!

Scotty: Agh, laddy, you never tell the Captain how long it will really take! How do you expect to be thought of as a miracle worker!

It was a nice little moment when you realize that Scotty was bullshitting Kirk throughout the whole original series and six movies.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 3:56pm

What interested me about DS9 initially was the idea that this was the ass-end of Federation space— the place where the machines didn't work and where Star Fleet sent the fuck-ups of the Federation. I was dreadfully disappointed in how super-competent everyone and everything was, and they did the same damned bait-&-switch in Voyager.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 4:11pm

They recycled that joke from "The Search for Spock"

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 4:17pm

You'd have to think that just getting into Starfleet would require an enormous amount of intelligence and resourcefulness. The high level of the vocabulary esp on TNG really demonstrated that. That's why I always thought Barkley would never have gotten so far being so incompetent around his crewmates.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Gentle Herpes

3/06/09 4:47pm

I figure Barkley should've set off rape alarms in Troy's head from the moment he stepped on the ship.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Gentle Herpes

3/07/09 9:00am

Besides his Holodeck addiction was Barkley that much of a fuckup? Was he shown to be a competent worker, or did he just all-around suck?

I wasn't a huge TNG fan- it's been a long time since I've seen any of those episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Gentle Herpes

3/07/09 10:35am

Are you sure Scotty got their fat out of the fire for pure reasons? He seems to have kept a wee bit fer his self, laddies!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gentle Herpes

3/07/09 11:40am

Aqualad, Barkley was introduced as a brilliant engineer but completely flustered and inept socially. The holoduction ep came later where he recreated the whole crew so he could pretend to be strong and capable (boffing Troi, playing captain). Though I did like the Barkley's Brain ep a lot.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 11:10am

Opinions

Both episodes could have been improved by Evil Lincoln escaping from the holodeck.

The thing that never rang true with "Galileo" and other early episodes for me is that Spock's "logic" seemed more like denseness. Like thinking he could logically reason with pissed off cavemen (or whatever) made him almost entirely clueless as to how to survive in a scary "illogical" galaxy.

P.S. Yeoman Rand was out trying to score some smack behind the cafeteria truck on the Desilu back lot. Really.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 11:27am

Awww, is that true? How sad.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 11:38am

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

Shatner's "Star Trek Memories" books go into this in some detail.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 11:52am

Right. Apparently being logical means that you have no idea what emotions are.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 12:06pm

Hey, JBMC, watch those aspersions you cast about my favorite waffle head. Wiki doesn't say anything about smack, booze at the worst.

I can't believe she was only in 8 eps! That beehive sure makes an impact on impressionable young minds.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 12:24pm

Tinsel-

I tentatively stand by my statement. A lengthy perusal of the Interweb may provide you with a more detailed report.

Also, it does seem like she was in every-other episode when I was a kid. Ah, to be young...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 2:14pm

I also wonder how much in Shatner's bios is "artistic license."

[Reply](#)

- [PhilWal](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 3:22pm

REAL HOLOGRAPHIC SIMULATED EVIL LINCOLN IS BACK!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/06/09 4:54pm

The points you guys are making remind me of the not-often-quoted third & fourth lines of Rudyard Kiplings "If...":

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;

Though, now that I look back at it, he has some advice for "Shore Leave" too:

If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with triumph and disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/07/09 9:17am

The best5 interpretation of Kipling's "If" is Alan Partridge's version:

"If you do X, Y and Z, Bob's your uncle."

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/07/09 9:18am

DAMN YOU STRAY 5!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/07/09 10:24am

I've read Whitney (Rand's)'s biography and there's no talk about smack, and she certainly seems more candid (if less entertaining) than Shatner, bless his soul...

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/07/09 10:32am

(Announcer voice)

It's LINCOLN, and he's out to PRESERVE THE UNION, so WATCH YOUR ASS.

[Reply](#)

- [top scallop](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/20/09 5:39am

"You've been transported back in time... and to Mars..."

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 12:27pm

Get Used to Ferris' Dickishness

The plot point of a high-ranking Federation Commissioner or Commodore who happens to be onboard the Enterprise during a crisis and is a total and utter jackass happens over and over again in TOS.

Also, wasn't "Shore Leave" the first ep written by an already-famous sci-fi writer?

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 1:06pm

It was definitely the first time I've gotten to the end credits and said, "Hey, (famous sci-fi writer) wrote this episode!"

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 2:50pm

Shore Leave was written by Theodore Sturgeon who also wrote one of the series' best episodes, Amok Time. His best known science fiction novel is More Human Than Human.

He also was famous for saying that "90% of science fiction is crap but, then 90% of everything is crap".

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 3:32pm

Oh Amok Time. Now that was a great episode. And Journey to Babel. The two reviewed here were never among my favorites.



[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 3:53pm

Uh, Sturgeon's story was More Than Human. "More Human Than Human" is White Zombie.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 4:06pm

Don't forget that he also wrote "Killdozer."

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 4:19pm

nerd extra - "Shore Leave" is the only episode of TOS where the Enterprise orbits clockwise around the planet.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 4:58pm

that's the evil, goateed enterprise, not ours.

[Reply](#)

- [Peter Smith](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 5:11pm

I beg your pardon. "More Human Than Human" was Blade Runner before it was White Zombie.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 5:14pm

I'm hearing you all speaking in Comic Book Guy's voice.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)barefoot jim

3/06/09 5:32pm

because we are.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

3/07/09 10:37am

The vice is Comic Book Guy, but body is all woman....

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)barefoot jim

3/08/09 5:20pm

"The plot point of a high-ranking Federation Commissioner or Commodore who happens to be onboard the Enterprise during a crisis and is a total and utter jackass happens over and over again in TOS."

Roddenberry and a lot of the TOS creators were ex-military - their collective contempt/distaste for civilian authority comes up a lot in the stories.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 11:48am

Head vs. Heart

You're right that the head vs. heart debate is predictable. But there are certain times they always fall on the head side.

TV and movies have clearly established anger, fear, and frustration as Bad Emotions. Succumbing to those is supposed to be a character flaw. (See Godfather: Sonny.)

That's one of the reasons I liked the movie The Science of Sleep. It seemed to be leading up to the standard head vs. heart debate, but in the end, showed that if most people followed their heart and ignored logic and common sense, they would not be very functional, and would probably be creepy stalkers.

[Reply](#)

- [twif](#)Henry

3/06/09 2:44pm

another reason "heart" usually wins out is the deep rooted anti-intellectualism in american society.

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Henry

3/06/09 3:42pm

Good point.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Henry

3/06/09 3:44pm

Anti-intellectualism is \*not\* deep rooted in America. It is a recent phenomenon courtesy of the rise of the religious yahoos - thanks to Reagan, Bush I, then reached its current state of toxicity thanks to Dubya. The first 2/3 of the 20th cent. was "science knows best." Hence why I wasn't breast-fed, for instance. Or why abortion was legalized in the '70s.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Henry

3/06/09 3:45pm

And of course, we know by now that McCoy's tittering racism against Vulcans led to TNG's constant racism against Space Jews, ie the Ferengi.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Henry

3/06/09 4:22pm

Yeah, is McCoy a huge dick to Spock or what? It almost seems like, in their attempt to have one of each type of person on board, they threw in a sixties-style racist as well.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Henry

3/06/09 7:56pm

I guess in a world where race is supposed to be irrelevant, being the only alien on board would make Spock an "other." But humans by that point should have been a lot more sensitive. Maybe it's some residual racism that the only minorities on the bridge were the space receptionist and the bus driver.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Henry

3/07/09 10:29am

Science of Sleep seemed uncomfortably close to justifying stalking and breaking and entering as 'cute' to me...  
I like Gondry a lot, but he really needs a script...

[Reply](#)

- [Fictional Strumpet](#)Henry

3/07/09 6:23pm

McCoy was the only Southerner on board, so really it's not surprising he didn't like them green coloured Vulcans.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Henry

3/07/09 7:12pm

Not sure if anyone is coming back here, but I coincidentally found tvtropes article on this very thing. Plus, they refer to it as the Straw Vulcan.

[http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/...](http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Henry

3/09/09 7:55am

TV TROPES is a great site, and that article was really good.

Thanks for the tip, Henry.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 2:01pm

Good ones coming up

Squire of Gothos and Arena are both fun episodes, the later inspiring the line "Are there any useful supplies around? Try to fashion some kind of rudimentary lathe." from Galaxy Quest.

Also, I remember an interview with George Takei saying they wanted to have him be a samuri in Naked Time. He said "I grew up in California, I don't know anything about Japanese culture." They made him a swashbuckler, but is Shore Leave they were finally able to get a samuri in.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 2:21pm

SofG also gets a reference in the so-great-it's-painful Futurama ep.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 2:26pm

He's Korean. I'm from Encino.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 3:43pm

I think in one of the novels, the Squire is somehow associated with or identified as a "Q" of some sort. I like the novels. Sue me. They're the literary equivalent of potato chips.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 3:56pm

"Q Squared"

God help me, we're nerds.

I like the novels too, but I wish they were written a bit better.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 4:22pm

that's like wishing for baconaisse to be healthier.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/06/09 6:55pm

Some of the novels aren't badly written, although they generally bow to plot more than trying to weave poetic imagery. I particularly like Diane Carey's books that cover some of the pre-Kirk time, such as "Best Destiny." Too bad they didn't use some (or more) of them when they were doing "Enterprise."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/07/09 10:39am

He did but Mike Myers took all the credit...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/08/09 2:12pm

"Some of the novels aren't badly written,"

That, ladies and giant single-celled space creatures, is what we call a "back-handed compliment". It's also too generous by half. There may be a novel or two that isn't badly written, but I haven't read it ("The Final Reflection", being the only exception that comes to mind). I stopped reading ST novels years ago for this very reason (they're not well-plotted, either). Every few years someone convinces me to read one, and it never fails to disappoint.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/09/09 7:59am

The only novel I've read is

'Vulcan's Glory' which (BRAGGING RIGHTS) was not written by, but given to me personally (with dedication) by one other than DC Fontana herself!

Ha!

(Excuse me for bringing this up so mate, but I'll be sure to rub it in later, the next time someone starts up on novels... Why i've been so remiss up to now escapes me!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/07/09 10:16am

Grace Lee Hooker

I was just watching the Billy Wilder film,

Irma La Douce, when I noticed one of the whores ('that's one homely hooker', says I) with Shirley Maclean....

It was Grace Lee, our own Yeoman Rand!

(Once again with awful hair! Apparently it's not just in Space, but in 1950's France, too!)

I think she must have done it before Trek...

Funny how everyone (myself included) thought she was such hot stuff back then...

Has anyone else read her autobiography? She speak of trek as the high point in her life and says she left after a drunken 'rehearsal' with one of the producers (after the habitual Friday trek cocktail party, ah the 60's!) turned into rape...

No kidding, it's pretty harrowing and comes out of the blue... I haven't read it all as it turns into bit of a preachy AA text, but you gotta feel for the girl...

Plus she was one of my first crushes and I wasn't there to protect her.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

3/07/09 11:45am

Yecch, Erma the Douche, the nadir of Wilder's output.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 3:36am

I'd rather have gone to the Laugh-In parties, don't you remember those? All the girls danced in itty-bitty bikinis and the guys wrote graffiti all over them?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 7:10am

Sock it to me! Nixon was such a cut-up when he'd had a few!

And Wilder did worse than Irma: Buddy, Buddy, anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 12:01pm

Well, granted, RJ. But at least he had the excuse of being old and not at the height of his powers. Unlike Douche and 7 yr Retch.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 2:14pm

"But at least he had the excuse of being old and not at the height of his powers. "

Wilder, or Nixon?

[Reply](#)

- [Fictional Strumpet](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 6:17pm

Gene Wilder, or Pat Nixon?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

3/08/09 8:15pm

Van Wilder and Cynthia Nixon

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

3/09/09 8:02am

Gotta agree on 7 Year Itch...

In spite of Cinerama and Monroe it's really boring— yet by far one of his biggest hits...

Says more about Monroe's bosoms than Wilder's chops, methinks...

That said, I loves me some Billy.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 11:02am

Shore Leave

With my luck, I would have gone down to that planet right after reading some Lovecraft.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)scotteb

3/06/09 11:05am

Or watched some hentai. Brrr.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)scotteb

3/06/09 11:07am

That was the other thing I was thinking of saying.

[Reply](#)

- [Pokes Buttington](#)scotteb

3/06/09 12:05pm

With my filthy mind, I would have one fantastic time on that planet.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmos](#)scotteb

3/06/09 1:53pm

Or watched Toys.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)scotteb

3/07/09 9:12am

Or 'Tetsuo: Iron Man'.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)scotteb

3/07/09 10:22am

Shit, I'd much rather go down to that planet than watch Toys!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)scotteb

3/07/09 10:31am

Ha. Not so spectacular - my husband, my kids, a beach house, whatever books I wanted, a pot of gumbo, and a huge pile of cocaine...oops. wait...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)scotteb

3/07/09 11:34am

Yeah, but it'd be synthecaine, so you're ok.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)scotteb

3/07/09 10:44pm

Well, if it's on the Holodeck, apparently, it'd just be spoooge particles anyway...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Prole Hole](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 12:05pm

Galileo 7

The thing that makes G7 a B (which i think is a pretty fair assessment) rather than just a C is the acting - whatever else you can say about Spock's fairly faulty logic, Leonard Nimoy plays it with appropriate seriousness - he really SELLS the fact that there's a good chance that these characters, at least a few of which you might care about, could actually die.

The "caveman" threat is pretty un-neccessary and the time might have been better spent actually debating some of the points the episode tries to raise, but it does produce a threat which adds drama to what would otherwise be a fairly dry and academic debate. Remember, the show was only a dozen episodes in, so even if it's a bit artificial, they need SOMETHING exciting to happen...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Prole Hole

3/06/09 12:12pm

I think Rod just wanted the crew to encounter a whole range of societies from the most primitive all the way to the Space Fop of Gothos.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Prole Hole

3/06/09 12:15pm

Well, Tinsel, that's also possible - I was trying hard to look on the positive side. Let's face it, cavemen in science fiction is like encountering an alien race with powers vastly in excess of humanity, yet are somehow still defeated by those puny Earth Men - essentially inevitable.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Prole Hole

3/06/09 1:31pm

I think what happened a lot of times is that people wandered through the prop warehouses at Paramount and saw what they had available, then wrote stories around them. Even as kid, I could recognize the same props and costumes being used for Star Trek that were used for Wild Wild West, and other shows of the time.

I always looked at Wild Wild West as a kind of "sister" show to Star Trek, and not just because the leads were stocky little fuckers who wore insanely tight pants.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Prole Hole

3/06/09 3:51pm

I noticed as a kid that there were lots of similarities between TOS and all the old Westerns playing on the other channels — the actors, a lot of the sets, even the style and pacing of the show. That was the best thing about TNG— it didn't look or feel like all the other shows out there. I only wish they had done the same w/ DS9 and Voyager and gone further away w/ from the older shows.

[Reply](#)

- [Office Dog](#)Prole Hole

3/09/10 10:19am

I liked Galileo 7 better than a B, although I agree with all your complaints. There are a few things that redeem the (admittedly horrible) Straw Vulcan contrivances. First, I love Spock, so an episode focused this much on him—even if it is picking on him and his "damned logic!"—is something I've been craving for a while. Second, I totally agree with Zack's theory that the best episodes are the ones where the stakes are high, and this is about as high as they get: three beloved characters stranded on a hostile world, a plagued colony waiting for supplies, and Kirk torn between his friends and his duty. Even if the deadline is totally arbitrary, it adds a level of urgency to a situation that's already pretty dire. And Finally, you gotta love the end-of-episode zingers between Kirk and Spock, followed by that fake laughter from everyone. Sulu damn near crashes the ship, he's fake-laughing so hard! Ha ha ha. Ha ha ha ha. Ha ha ha ha ha. \*credits\*

[Reply](#)

- [Cliffy](#)Office Dog

4/13/12 7:01pm

Hello poster from two years ago! How are you?

Anyway, one thing I really like about it is that Spock is really serious about preserving sentient life even though it puts him at a tactical disadvantage. His decision seems to have been a mistake, but even Kirk — a legitimately honorable dude — would have sighed and started blasting way earlier, seeing no way around it.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [George Liquor](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 4:01pm

Planet of the Eegahs?

AV Club, you have just made my day brighter.

Watch out for snakes!

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)George Liquor

3/06/09 4:27pm

Oh — STEMLO! Of course!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)George Liquor

3/06/09 8:51pm

Rooooooooiiiiieee! ROOOOOXXXXXIIEEEEE!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)George Liquor

3/06/09 9:05pm

We should've taken my dune buggy.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)George Liquor

3/07/09 1:00am

Did I mention my tires are filled with water?

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)George Liquor

3/07/09 10:40am



He tampered in God's domain.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

3/06/09 5:58pm

Aliens can do anything?

It has been a while since I've seen Shore Leave, but I always thought the backstory here was much more grounded than that. The holodeck always felt like much more of a magic wand: the Shore Leave technology made more sense, since they were actually making physical objects (which, for example, they do all the time in TNG) on demand. The only "magic" here is the ability to grossly read some thoughts, which seems to me less of a leap than, say, "holodeck programming".

Now, I might be remembering some things wrong about this episode, but there at least seemed to be a reasonable mechanism behind what was going on, in opposition to the holodeck, which is pure plot device through and through.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)partdavid

3/06/09 6:07pm

You're right, the things in "Shore Leave" \_are\_ physical; but I'd say the ability to create things within seconds of a person thinking them, and then seamlessly integrate those things into the environment without anyone ever noticing it, is pretty magical, and about as reasonable as the holodeck. The only explanation we really get is that there are tremendous "factories" below the planet's surface, and, snark aside, that's the only explanation you need—I wouldn't call it exactly reasonable, but it works just fine in the ep. Again, just like the holodeck.

[Reply](#)

- [LazarouMonkeyTerror](#)partdavid

3/07/09 8:35am

Its all done nanotechnology!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)partdavid

3/07/09 10:41am

It's int he same ballpark, like McGuffin's and Pixie Dream Girls (though i'd argue that PDGs and Magical Negroes are the same thing, and have been called by other names before being 'discovered' by Nabin, again, bless his pointy little head)

[Reply](#)

- [Kelberon](#)Zack Handlen

3/08/09 4:12am

Come on, Private Eye Picard (not the title of that episode) was cool.

I always liked to think of the Holodeck being on the Enterprise in Next Generation as an experimental thing, since it was supposed to be the most advanced ship at the time it was built. Plus, it had things like families and schools, so it could be used for something like an educational field trip, not just individual crewman getting their jollies. Of course, the Holodeck might not have seemed so disastrous if it had seen more casual mentions, rather than almost every Holodeck centered plot being "It's gone horribly wrong! We must take control back!"

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Kelberon

3/08/09 12:02pm

The resolution of the Moriarty ep was pretty damn clever.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kelberon

3/09/09 8:03am

Agreed on Moriarty...

One of the first ST TNG's that agreeably surprised me...

[Reply](#)

- [top scallop](#)Kelberon

3/20/09 6:03am

I haven't seen a lot of TNG eps recently, but in TOS, the body count is so high that it seems like a few mishaps with a holodeck would hardly get noticed. Someone has probably done this more systematically, but it seems like the average is one an episode or so (so one a month, maybe?), which puts being on a ship right up there with being a Victorian explorer in Africa or #3 in Al Qaeda in terms of mortality.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen

3/07/09 2:30am

Kirk and Spock are Morons.

Watching "Galileo Seven" again had me wondering how those two ever got that high up in Starfleet's chain of command. Kirk's plan to search an entire planet by beaming down landing to look around for the missing shuttle is behind ludicrous and had pretty much no chance of success. Thankfully the writers at least didn't got that far as to have Kirk that lucky.

Spock doesn't fair much better in the smarts department this episode as he thinks firing phasers into the air should frighten primitive giant cavemen away, primitive creatures wouldn't have a clue what those bright beams are. Why would they be afraid of something they have no concept of? Spock should have at least had his men explode boulders or something near the giants.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MovieMike

3/07/09 10:44am

I imagine ost creatures know rto say away from lightning, fire and loud sounds, as well as bizarre activity that they've never seen. Try it around an animal or a child (though i'll deny having told you to do so)

As to Kirk, I'm right with you: Why not shrink down miniature landing parties and sprinkle them around?

[Reply](#)

- [Mark2000](#)Zack Handlen

10/26/11 3:18pm

I think you're too hard on Spock in Galileo 7. All we need to do is look at the decisions that lead to the most recent war in the Persian Gulf. A whole room full of otherwise intelligent people seriously thought we would be treated as liberators. That people in Iraq would act "rationally" and that this as an opportunity. But they didn't they acted like any of us who have feelings would have: Get pissed as hell for being invaded by an outside force that thinks it knows whats best for you. You can't expect more from someone who doesn't even get emotion to begin with.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/16 10:54pm

I hear you, Zach Handlen. I saw MSTSK watch Eegah. "Look out for snakes." Did you hear Michael Scott say it on The Office?

[Reply](#)

- [i and 1](#)Zack Handlen

5/24/09 10:55pm

the end of galileo 7

the final minute of that episode is incredible, as good as star trek gets.

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek: "The Squire Of Gothos" / "Arena"*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 13, 2009

[Comments \(159\)](#)



There's the universe, and the universe is basically everything. Inside the universe are things called galaxies—and there are a ton of these, probably around a 100 billion. And inside each galaxy are suns and around those suns are planets. Some of those planets can support life. Hopefully, some of those planets already do.

And if we go by *Star Trek*, at least two-thirds of that life consists of godlike-beings who want nothing more than to screw around with James T. Kirk.

The first time I went through this set (a year or two back, I think), I was amazed by two things: the shows held up much better than I was expecting, and the writers used the "like flies to wanton boys" plot, on average, at least six times per episode. Okay, so my math wasn't very good back then (I'd invented a drink that mixed Wild Turkey, Benadryl, and some pink stuff my dad bought me for my car that I think was supposed to be windshield wiper fluid. Most of what I remember of the past five years is in black and white and has subtitles), but whatever the actual numbers are, the god-plot happens a lot in *TOS*. It's the kind of mechanic that allows for a lot of fluidity in story-telling; the "science" of *Trek* is already loose enough to allow some breathing room, but an all-powerful alien force makes anything possible. The reason we're frightened of the unknown is that we can't predict it, but from a story-telling perspective, that's actually a benefit. You can have, say, a spoiled brat conjuring castles and planets out of the void, or a man-child in a silver dress freezing a star-ship, and because we don't *know* that these things are impossible, we accept it.

Of course, that sort of thing can get old—you keep taking away the rules, eventually your audience is going to get bored. Because if anything can happen, when it does, there's no reason to be surprised or delighted or engaged. The trick is to use the ability sparingly, and either have it be a means to an end, or else make sure the being with the magical powers has a distinctive enough personality that their abilities are less of interest than they are. The latter is the tack that "Squire of Gothos" takes, and it works beautifully; while the episode is in some way reminiscent of "Charlie X," all the way down to the ending, "Squire" is by far the superior, enough to make any familiarity seem irrelevant, and to earn it a place as one of *TOS*'s most deservedly iconic hours.

Both eps this week are wonderfully structured; in "Squire," we open with the Enterprise finding an uncharted planet seemingly incapable of supporting life. Before anyone can do much about it, Sulu and Kirk disappear from the bridge, and we get to watch Spock and the crew trying to figure out what's going on. Kirk's gone adventuring before, but this is a rare case where we don't actually follow him on the trip, and that change, though small, does a nice job of setting the hook. It gets weirder when one of the screens on the bridge displays the words, "Greetings and Felicitations," followed by "Hip-Hip-Hoorah. Tallyho!" (Nimoy's reaction here is hilarious.) The message appears to be coming from the one spot on the planet below with life forms, so Spock sends McCoy and two men, Jaeger and DeSalle, down to investigate. For once, we get a sense of a landing party being selected rather than assumed, as Scotty volunteers, but Spock, wisely enough, says it's more important he stays on the ship.

Instead of the hellscape they were expecting (for once, they even wore air-masks!), McCoy and the others find an environment remarkably like Earth's, with breathable air, plant-life, and your standard-issue castle. Inside the castle is a drawing room with a number of trophies on display, including the salt monster from "The Man Trap," what appears to be a crocodile head over the mantle, and, most importantly, the frozen forms of Kirk and Sulu. McCoy takes a reading and can't make heads or tails of it, but just when things couldn't get anymore confusing, a stranger appears in period garb, does a few riffs on a harpsichord, and sets Kirk and Sulu free. The stranger introduces himself as General Trelane, now retired, and informs the puzzled crewmen that they are guests on planet Gothos. Trelane's been observing Earth for some time, and, apparently, he wants some friends. Well, maybe not friends; friendship implies roughly equal status. This is more like a Elmyra from *Tiny Toons* getting a home delivery from the pet store.

Squire Trelane is that most terrifying of creatures, a brat who expects to get exactly what he wants with the power to make that expectation a reality. Like Charlie X, he can do just about anything, but unlike Charlie, there's not an emo bone in the twerp's body. It makes the episode a lot more fun to watch; in the title role, William Campbell is demanding, energetic, and endlessly delighted with himself. The serious captain/whimsical threat dynamic is one that *Trek* would return to again and again, and while it would get more dramatically complex over the years, there's something pure right here at the source. Campbell hits the ideal funny/annoying balance, and the dynamic between him and the various crewmembers he torments is terrific.

Of special note is the way the Enterprise's resident straight man (in comedy terms, not sexuality; Kirk'd screw anything if it took the time to put on a mini-skirt, but McCoy's just a pipe and smoking jacket away from hitting a 0 on the Kinsey Scale), Mr. Spock, handles the crisis. After the first group to encounter Trelane makes a brief escape back to the ship, the squire magicks himself onto the bridge and steals away most everyone there, including the first group, the Yeoman of the Week, Uhura, and Spock. Unsurprisingly, the half-Vulcan takes an instant dislike to His Twerpishness, and when Trelane calls him on it, Spock responds with the best line of the episode: "I object to you. I object to intellect without discipline. I object to power without constructive purpose." It's simple, straightforward, and all kinds of badass. Nimoy delivers it without ornamentation, and the dignity he conveys without just a few calm sentences makes Trelane seem about as impressive as a five year-old with a box of matches.

Which is appropriate, given how things wind up. We've got another deus ex machine, but while that's usually death to good writing, it works here because it feels like an organic plot development; in one sense, the writers put themselves in an impossible spot, but once you've seen how they choose to get out of that spot, you can't imagine it going anywhere else. In terms of build-up, "Squire" never feels like a series of fake-outs in order to pull us through to the last five minutes, although that's what it is—the crew never gives up on defeating Trelane, despite the hopelessness of it, so we never give up ourselves.

For example, there's the business with a mirror that may or may not conceal a device Trelane may or may not be using to do all the crazy things he does; Kirk takes a risk and manages to manipulate the situation to a point where he can shoot the mirror out. There is a machine behind it, and that machine is wrecked, but it's all for naught, since Trelane didn't really need it. (I suppose Tommy will be pleased, at least.) In a way that's sort of a cheat, but given that we never really know exactly how Trelane operates, I'd argue that it's an acceptable cheat. And since we're all trained to expect magic bullet solutions in situations like these, it's a decent twist to have someone succeed at something only to find that the success doesn't work out quite the way they'd hoped. In the end, Kirk is left in a one-on-one fight against a creature who can do whatever he wants and can't stand losing; but just when things are at their darkest, two blobs of colored

light appear in the sky and tell Trelane it's time to put away his toys and come home. Again, this is a lot like "Charlie X," but while Charlie's predicament was played for pathos, this one is done largely for laughs. It works, too; even knowing what's coming, I still get a kick out hearing Trelane's mom tell him to go to his room. (There are a lot of nice visual effects in this episode; I loved how the spotlight on Trelane gradually tightens until both it and he disappear.)

There's something terrifying in the idea that a race of beings with the power to warp space and time might have kids running around, but I guess when you have all of cosmos and eternity to play in, it's important to find ways to keep yourself occupied. Some folks create new versions of themselves to instruct, while others prefer to out-source the whole parenting thing by interfering in the lives of significantly less powerful alien races. Such is the case of our second episode this week, "Arena." Here's another one you've probably heard referenced, even if you haven't seen the original—it introduces us to a race of irritable space lizards (aka, the Gorn), and the second half features Kirk struggling against one of the Gorn in a duel that will determine the fate of the Enterprise. If your wondering where Guy's "rudimentary lathe" line in *Galaxy Quest* came from, look no further.

Our heroes have just gotten an invite from Commodore Travers of Cestus III; he wants everybody to come down for a meal and chit-chat, and, given past experience, Kirk can tell you that the Commodore's meals are very much worth the time. (I love the nice touch here that McCoy et al are really jonesing for a "home-cooked" meal. Makes you wonder what synthesized food tastes like. Is there that much of a difference, or is the good doctor just hungry for a change in atmosphere?) Weirdly enough, Travers makes a special point of requesting Kirk bring his tactical crew with him. This sets off a few alarm bells for Spock, but everyone still beams down to the planet as planned; there they find that Cestus III has been laid to waste, and whoever did the waste-laying immediately sets to work bumping off Kirk and his men. It's a trap, and soon the Enterprise is under attack as well.

As with "Squire," the hook is set fast in "Arena"; but unlike "Squire," we get two premises combined instead of just having one develop over time. The first premise has the landing party fighting against an unseen (and clearly well-armed) enemy. We actually don't find out who the opponent is until well into the episode—before then, all we have to go on is that they're cold-blooded, and there's a lot of them. Oh, and they got some nasty guns, that's probably relevant. The sequence planetside is effectively tense; that tenseness generally translates as Kirk running around and the occasional red-shirt getting toasted (we even get a classic "Captain, I see somethiZAP" moment), but it works. Shatner gets in a tuck and roll *and* some serpentine running action, so I'm sure it was a happy day of filming for him. We're reminded of James T.'s love of his ship, as he orders Sulu to make an escape even though the Enterprise can't beam the landing party back aboard through their defense screens. We lose a couple crewmen, and find a survivor near death, before Kirk remembers the planet's arsenal, and manages to launch a missile at where he and Spock presume the enemy to be. The attack works—maybe a little too well, really—and the aliens flee, allowing everyone planetside to escape to the ship.

Kirk has his blood up now; as we've seen in "Balance of Terror," an attack on an Earth outpost is never a good sign, and the most obvious conclusion to make here is that whoever blew up Cestus III is prepping for a full-scale invasion. This is supported by the fact that the Enterprise was lured in—apparently, they're the only ship in the quadrant capable of defending against an outside force. (Which is interesting; I guess the Enterprise does policing duty in between its more scholarly pursuits?) The lone survivor of the attack describes a slaughter, and Kirk makes the decision: pursuit, and destruction. It's the only way to be sure.

Really, a lot of the set-up of "Arena" matches "Balance," which makes it even more of a surprise when things make a sharp veer left to our other premise in the second act. (Or is it third? I can never remember if hour-long shows are considered five acts or three.) As Kirk grows more anxious to catch-up with the enemy, the enemy suddenly comes to a dead stop; and when the Enterprise moves to engage, they find themselves caught as well. There's a light show on the monitor, and a booming voice informs the crew that they've just stumbled into the Metrons' neighborhood, and the Metrons are *not* pleased. Like nearly ever super-intelligent race, the Metrons have decided that humans are too warlike and savage to be trusted (it's funny how such a huge chunk of sci-fi seems structured as an apology for war and the atom bomb; maybe in the absence of a God who'll listen, we find it necessary to create substitutes that we can beg for forgiveness), so it's time for some Reality TV, space-style. Kirk gets snagged from the bridge and finds himself on the standard "rock and dirt" planet, and along with him is the captain of the alien ship. The Metrons named the other race

the "Gorn," which is as much name as we ever get, but really, all you need to know is that it's a SPACE LIZARD. Wearing a rather fetching cave-man outfit, as well.

The Kirk/Gorn fight is one for the ages; the combat on *Trek* isn't really up to modern standards in terms of pacing or choreography, but there's a certain charm to it nonetheless. The Gorn movies *very* slowly, but it's a strong mofo—the initial wrestling convinces Kirk that his best bet is to try and construct the weapon that the Metrons promised would be available. (This promise calls their motives into question; they claim, in that infuriatingly snooty manner that these things always use, to look down on humankind's violence, but all this seems like the perfect excuse to get some hand-to-hand action in without having to get their own hands dirty in the process. It would've been awesome to learn that the whole set-up was the space equivalent of a wrestling match on Pay-Per-View.) Kirk dictates his plans into the "recorder" the Metrons provided, but what he doesn't realize is that the recorder, which looks suspiciously like an electric razor, is actually a direct communicator to the Gorn, who listens to Kirk's plans and moves accordingly. It puts a hilarious spin on things when Kirk talks about how he hopes he's got cleverness on his side.

While the Gorn constructs an elaborate rope and rock trap, Kirk comments on the scenery (Kirk on diamonds: "Perhaps the hardest substance known in the universe." Is he speaking for the benefit of Ms. Johnson's third grade class?), and does some rock throwing of his own. The battle weighs heavy on him and his opponent, and once the Gorn lets Kirk know about the whole communicator/recorder thing, Kirk learns that the Gorns attacked Cestus III because it was an intrusion into their territory. In their eyes, it was the Earthmen who were invading, and they responded accordingly. This doesn't erase the fact that the Gorns went on a massacre without bothering to make their problems known to anyone, nor does it fully explain why they were so eager to get the Enterprise involved, but it does make the previously black-and-white situation a lot more gray. (Shades of cowboys and indians here, as well.)

Just when things are at their darkest, Kirk manages to construct a handmade gun out of found deposits of nitrate, sulfur, and charcoal, and shoot the Gorn captain in the chest. It isn't a killing shot, though, and when it comes time for Kirk to finish the job, he demurs; given what he's learned of the Gorn's actions, he'd rather take his chances negotiating with the other race, rather than continue with the killing. The Metrons, impressed by Kirk's maturity, let him and the alien go, but not before revealing themselves to our hero, and telling him that, maybe in a thousand years or so, everybody can sit down for a chit-chat. Apparently, the human race is a promising "predator," and, given time, we may develop into someone worth knowing.

As always, we're left to piece together our own motives from the information given. The aliens in "Squire" and "Arena" are, by turns, fickle, arrogant, and uncompromising, and it's hard to take much comfort in their seeming omnipotence, even when that omnipotence appears just. If one of the main themes of *TOS* is the uncertainty of exploration, with that uncertainty comes the possibility that there are others out there, waiting between the stars, with far more experience and wisdom—and you have to wonder, given their love of screwing around with the humans they run across, who's pulling *their* strings?

#### **Grades:**

**"Squire Of Gothos": A**

**"Arena": A-**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- The dialogue in "Squire" is exceptionally good. I loved McCoy's "Straw would taste better than his meat, water would taste a hundred times better than his brandy."
- What's a Nubian?
- Watch Nimoy's expression when McCoy appeals to the Metrons in "the name of civilization." It's as close to an eye roll as one can get without actually rolling one's eyes.
- Next week: "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" and "Court Martial"

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (159)

- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 11:09am

The Squire of Gothos

Interplay's early-90s Star Trek computer games often showed off sequels to some of these shows. Trelane appeared in a chapter in the second game called "No Man's Land," which was similar to the plot of the Squire of Gothos but had the crew struggling through Trelane's romanticized version of World War I. When Kirk tried to show Trelane how childish his view of war was, Trelane swept him off to what was (for a 1992 computer game) a grisly depiction of trench warfare. It was unexpected twist: Not only did Trelane know the suffering of what war, he didn't seem particularly moved by it. A true child.

It showed, as Zack said, you can get a lot of mileage out of the god-being plot. And I suspect anyone writing Star Trek stories needs to come to that, especially when the limited room of the Enterprise makes "normal" plots difficult.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 11:10am

Ahem — "Not only did Trelane know the suffering of war, he didn't seem particularly moved by it." Carry on.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 11:56am

Seconded on that — I'm not much of a Trekkie but those games are among the best of their genre.

I remember a lot of people loving a text-based Star Trek game published in 1985 (the Kobayashi something other) but my father threw up his hands in frustration over it. It's not as much fun to move characters around when you have to type commands.

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 12:03pm

There was an old mainframe Trek game I used to enjoy, I'll have to see if I can find a copy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 12:14pm

When I was a kid I typed (in Basic) something like 5000 lines of a Star Trek game into my computer, with graphics like:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 12:16pm

Crap-

Wasn't done:



My point was, I never got the damn thing to work and it soured me on the entire computing industry. Now I'm penniless and living in my parent's basement. Sigh.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 12:30pm

Denby- If it has Kobayashi in the title, then it must have been Kobayashi Maru.

I enjoyed the Interplay series as well, from the 25th Anniversary edition to Starfleet Academy. I especially loved playing out the Kobayashi Maru in SA, and the many different roads you could go down.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 12:57pm

Legacy for Xbox is not a bad game at all, and probably the best Trek game since the aforementioned 25th Anniversary/Judgment Rites games and Starfleet Academy. It has missions from all the incarnations of the shows voiced by the Captains of those ships. Come on, you know you want to blow up some Xindi...

25th Anniversary and Judgment Rites were great because they felt like episodes of the original series. All the original actors participated, including the actors who played Trelane and Harry Mudd. They were also modeled after the dynamic of the show, unlike games like Elite Force, with less shooting and more problem solving. Also, primary colors!

Unfortunately, "adventure" games aren't as popular now as they were in the early stages of PC gaming, so we probably won't see another one like it soon. An RPG might work for Trek, if you followed the career of an officer as he worked his way up the ranks, but RPGs are heavily capitalistic. In a society void of money, how would this work? In Starfleet, you couldn't upgrade your attire, anyway...or get a better phaser...

[Reply](#)

- [Oliver Miller](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 1:16pm

I'm a nerd AND an old person for knowing this, but the game was called "The Kobayashi Alternative," and I used to play it on my C64. It actually was kind of a cool game, in a way. The plot — Sulu is missing, you're exploring near the neutral zone, and there are ten or so weird planets (a medieval planet, cat people planet, creepy abandoned planet, etc...). All of this coolness, however, is undone by the fact that it's a text game from 1985, and so most interactions with the game go like this:

GO TO BRIDGE

>>>>I don't understand you.

WALK TO BRIDGE

>>>>I don't understand you.

BRIDGE

>>>>I don't understand you.

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGHHHHHHHHH

>>>>I don't understand you.

...I had to stop playing out of frustration, and never saved poor Sulu.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 1:55pm

That was a lot of people's reaction, slcgrad. That game was probably too far ahead of the technology at the time to be anything but frustrating.

Your frustration reminds me (in a related note) how shitty most non-Infocom parsers were back then.

PICK UP GUN  
>>>What?  
PICK UP RAY GUN  
>>>What?  
PICK UP RAY GUN YOU DESCRIBED AS LYING AT MY FEET  
>>>What?  
TWIST AROUND. GO FUCK YOURSELF  
>>>I don't understand "twist"

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 1:55pm

MPBC,

I take exception with your claim that Star-trek featured a moneyless economy. Sure, that's the party line, but IMO this was one of the least realistic liberal conceits in the ST canon (right up there with humans "learing" to overcome a violent nature that was shaped by a million years' evolution). Case in point, in Arena, Kirk refers to the diamonds as "being worth a fortune". And there are numerous other examples throughout the various series and movies.

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 2:06pm

@ERD and slcgrad, I still occasionally quote from the old Hitchhiker's Guide game

>Relax

A brave, Zen-like effort. It fails.

It and Bureaucracy had the best responses to whatever crap you typed in, that's what made those games so damn enjoyable.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 2:07pm

The only real fun I had with text adventure games was trying all the swear words to see if any of them got a response. I used to have a Hobbit game, and it was okay; I remember getting all the way to Smaug once, but I died before I could save. (If there even was a save.)

Zork was pretty sweet, though.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 2:16pm

As an easily entertained nine-year-old, I laughed when I typed "go toilet" into Adventure and got the reply "Ah that feels better."

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 2:38pm

The one-winged parrot in Bureaucracy you had to show the picture of Ronald Reagan to would shout "Death to the running dogs of imperialism!", which is the best slogan ever.

Solving the bablefish puzzle was probably the most satisfying gaming experience of my life. I never finished Zork, though.

[Reply](#)

- [ubik2000](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 3:04pm

"At this point, brave men have been known to break down and cry"

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 3:09pm

It should come as no surprise that, "I have a headache and no tea," is a common utterance in my household, though "tea" often gets replaced with other substances, like beer.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 3:42pm

:: you are eaten by a grue ::

[Reply](#)

- [S. Jerusalem](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 5:05pm

I had to sit there and wonder why I couldn't get ye Flask.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/13/09 7:08pm

You have awakened long-slumbering memories of deep frustration with those text-based adventure games. I still remember my character and password (both of which were Knight Rider-related) for Wizardry for the Apple II+.

Stupid acid blobs (or whatever they were).

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/14/09 12:18am

Holy Codfish Balls, I just received the Zork Anthology collection today from Amazon; \$5 plus s&h!

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/14/09 12:22am

Anyone here play those fabulous old Sierra games? The ones with 16 colors, a text parser and about a million ways to die?

[Reply](#)

- [CrazyBlend](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/14/09 12:29am

I enjoyed playing those Infocom games, but I confess the only one I finished was Wishbringer (an introductory-level game).

Whenever I read a walkthrough for Zork or Enchanter or one of those other games, I was always like, "Oh my god! How could anyone EVER figure that out?!!"

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/14/09 12:30am

Not a million ways to die, but did Sierra do 'Jones in the Fast Lane'?

[Reply](#)

- [urtext](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/14/09 9:57am

My first experience with a computer was playing Adventure in the mid 70s - a friend of my parents worked for the military and brought over one of those giant typewriter-like computer terminal that took tractor fed rolls of paper and had an acoustic coupler. I played it for hours, was hooked immediately - the fact that everything was so slow added to the experience, like the computer was considering its response. I may still have the printout somewhere.

[Reply](#)

- [Rex Murphy](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/15/09 5:00am

My friend had most of the old Sierra games (King's Quest, Space Quest, Police Quest, Leisure Suit Larry, etc.) and they were a lot of fun, even if I only sat beside him, never allowed to actively participate (damn you, Ian Fuchs!). My girlfriend recently downloaded the original Leisure Suit Larry game and my memories were instantly crushed.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/16/09 11:38am

@Hercules Rockefeller: You're correct: the Federation clearly had a money-based economy in TOS. I can think of at least two episodes ("Mudd's Women" and "Devil in the Dark") that featured miners trying to get rich. The "no-money" conceit was introduced in TNG, as part of Roddenberry's vast retcon in which he willfully misinterpreted the appeal of Star Trek. Part of the appeal of TOS was that it posited a) that humanity wouldn't destroy itself in a nuclear holocaust, which seemed like an optimistic prediction at the time, and b) that hot black women could become junior officers, which seemed even more wildly optimistic. Roddenberry convinced himself that Star Trek was about humanity overcoming all of its problems, which is why conflict between the crew, and even any conflict within the federation, was declared off-limits in TNG, which crippled an otherwise promising show.

But one caveat: the moneyless society isn't a "liberal conceit". Liberals just want a nice progressive tax system so money doesn't get too concentrated. It might be a distant communist conceit, though note that even the soviet union had money. It's really just a Roddenberry conceit. Star Trek really never gave much thought to how the society of the Federation might actually work.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:11pm

Props

Zack, just wanted to let you know that this is one of the most engaging, well-written articles I've seen in a while (not just on AVC, which is generally pretty great). I'm not trying to be sycophantic, it just made me really happy to read this, and I wanted you to know. Props to you.

In other words: It's simple, straightforward, and all kinds of bad-ass.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 12:23pm

I'll second this: best yet of Zack's highly enjoyable Trekcaps. I've loved both of these episodes forever, but it's interesting to see them paired up since they are both so tonally different.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 12:32pm

I also enjoy reading them as well. Like I've said before, it's nice to knock on the series silliness without bashing it.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 12:56pm

DS9

Oh, I forgot to add "sucks."

But that really goes without saying.

[Reply](#)

- [twif](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 1:46pm

wasn't much of a fan of ds9, but at least it had worf & o'brien.

best not to mention voyager.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 2:10pm

Last 3 seasons, DS9 came into its own, but by then who cares?

But you GOTTA love the explorations into Ferengi culture (even if Wally Sccechawn's voice is sooo annoying).

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 3:36pm

Star Trek: Special Victims Unit

<http://uncyclopedia.wikia.c...>

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 7:14pm

I guess I'll chime in with my praise, too. I really didn't have anything to comment beyond saying that these Trek recaps really want me to go and rent out the original series to watch the eps all over again. My wife wouldn't be happy, though; she thinks I'm a big enough nerd already.

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive Deleted](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 7:59pm

I don't understand the DS9 hate. Agreed, the first 2 seasons were weak, but so was the first 2 seasons of TNG. The introduction of the Dominion, Sisko coming to terms with his Emissary-ness and an over-arching storyline really made that show great. Hell, Ronald Moore recycled all the faith/war stuff from DS9 into BSG and people around here seem to have a pretty high opinion of that show.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 9:57pm

No, I'm sorry. DS9 sucked.

But YES on the enjoyableness of this column. It's fun being slightly Trek-nerdy again without fear of reprisal.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/13/09 11:37pm

What turned me off DS9 was the stoic \*boring\* one-note captain and the Bajoras were nothing but Fundamentalist Christians.

I did like the Lwaxana/Odo love story and Return to Tribbletown.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/14/09 12:30am

Goddammit, DS9 stole "all the faith/war stuff" from Babylon 5, not the other way around!

Other than DS9's incredible wooden captain, the whole character of Odo really bugged me. Why have a character dependent on sfx if you can't afford the sfx?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/14/09 12:58am

And Odo's face was naaaaaasty.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/14/09 4:28am

I want to add to the thanks, Zack. Your write-ups are fun and I like your take on the episodes. I also like the excuse to dig out the DVDs and watch them in order. It is remarkable how well they hold up, both visually and story wise.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/14/09 12:55pm

@Emperor Jim

It's the big one!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/15/09 12:07am

Different sides of the same coin, cub. : )

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/15/09 5:55pm

DS9's "In the Pale Moonlight": BEST. TREK. EPISODE. EVER.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 11:36am

Kirk vs. Gorn

"Arena" was my favorite episode when I was a kid, but seeing it again I wish they had made more out of Kirk's quest for revenge and how the humans and the Gorn are not so different. The brief verbal exchange between Kirk and the Gorn Captain is chilling and I really wish more of the episode had been on that level. Instead it just devolved into a gladiator match (I'm sure it's no coincidence that the Metron was wearing a toga).

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 12:00pm

I think TOS probably had enough "you and I aren't so different" episodes without the need for one more. It's not an invalid point though. Arena is an interestingly structures episode though and it does follow some unusual doglegs, which makes both the "oh another superior being" and the extended-and-slow fighting a lot easier to take. It speaks a LOT for this episode that it's still so instantly recognisable and iconic, from Vasquez Rock, to the Gorn itself, to the ripped shirts to.. well just about all of it really. A stone classic, one of the highlights of S1

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 12:27pm

The thing I remember most about "Arena" is the location. Star Trek didn't usually do a lot of location shooting, and in this particular case it used a very recognizable set of rocks called the Vasquez Rocks out in Antelope Valley. They used the rocks in a few other episodes, but they've also appeared in tons of other TV and movie and commercial productions. One I can think of immediately is the "3-D" spaceman fight sequence in the Tom Hanks movie, "Bachelor Party."

The rocks, man.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 12:47pm

While the costume might have its problems, the Gorn is one cool design. Plus the heavy breathing, wierd grunts, and alien voice are creepy. I've also heard that in the new remastered editions the Gorn blinks!

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 1:26pm

the gorn was one of my favorite TOS aliens when I was a kid. I was always disappointed that they never reappeared in the series. It's also a little surprising given how cheap the series was that they wouldn't want to re-use that costume a couple times. Another Vasquez Rocks movie - Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 2:03pm

+1 on the Gorn Love! I would have liked to see them show up somewhere else. Surely they'd be a worthy foe. And the crazy grunt breathing really freaked me out as a kid.

Uganda,

Sure, the bamboo cannon is a bit of a cheat, but the Metrons put the materials there for exactly that reason, so it's internally consistent. The thing that feels more like a cheat to me is the trope of humans overcoming stronger and more brutal aliens means of our greater cunning, creativity, intellect, etc. That's pretty played out. (although, to be fair, this is not limited to ST and maybe when "Arena" was first aired it wasn't played out yet.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 3:18pm

A CGI Gorn made an appearance on "Enterprise." I say that because I know you didn't watch it.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 4:35pm

I've always imagined that's the way the Bush presidency ended.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 11:32pm

HR, you just made me realize, if the Gorn were sophisticated enough to build and operate space ships, he should've been able to build a diamond cannon too.

I saw every ep of Enterprise and even liked them ('cept for the Nazi alien timeline). 3rd season arc with the Xindi war was brilliant, but you had to study each ep like the Talmud to follow it. Before its time, now that Lost and SBG have made that concept more familiar.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 12:25am

Yeah, but the Gorn was too cocky about being stronger and badder-ass than the puny human.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 4:23am

The Gorn really just followed another path. He found some basalt and sharpened a knife, and then made a trap. And it almost worked. I would suspect that if you looked around, there were the makings of a few different weapons that would catch your eye depending on your experience and training.

Or I've thought about this too much. Your pick.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 8:48pm

@Darby - You Rock! +10 internets

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Breakfast Balls

3/15/09 7:47pm

"I've always imagined that's the way the Bush presidency ended"

That is so perfect.

[Reply](#)

- [Morning Woodhouse](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

8/12/13 9:05am

Just rewatched this last night on Netflix Streaming ... and was stunned to see the Gorn blink. So apparently a) yes, he does and b) the Netflix streaming ones are remastered.

For a few of the earlier episodes (the 'flare' for Galileo Seven) I even thought "Wow, that effect looks much better than I would have thought they could do." I should have realized it was remastered, since I know they are doing that for Classic Who.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [A Little Touch of Schmilsson](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 11:09am

Could it be...

First?

[Reply](#)

- [A Little Touch of Schmilsson](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson



3/13/09 11:19am

With that out of the way, it sounds like Trelane paves the way for STNG's Q, my favorite character in that series.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 12:25pm

A noble attempt, sir. Still, I'm bound by AV Club law to demand your death by immolation.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 12:39pm

Trelane wasn't a Q, as far as I can tell. Trelane had a definite external power source, or sources, and Q's powers seem to reside within himself.

But yes, Trelane was the template for Q, even down to the extravagant costumes, dialogue and the mock trial Trelane gives Kirk (see Encounter At Farpoint).

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 2:16pm

John deLancey was brilliant but man, did I hate those Q eps. As if things weren't tough enough for the crew without him showing up to fuck with them.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 2:46pm

I always thought that Riker was selfish to reject Q's offer. If you think about it, it would have been Riker's duty to join the Q, so that he could assist the federation. Klingon's agitating? Romulan war bird just cloaked off the port bow? Borg kidnapped your captain? no problem, just call your own personal Q!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 2:46pm

Emperor Jim, I read Q Squared too, and loved it. Total fanservice book, with everything thrown in but the kitchen sink, but it was a helluva fun read.

[Reply](#)

- [Necron-99](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 6:44pm

I don't like Q. I really didn't like luxwana. I think that almost all the episodes that feature female leads are terrible, stupidly & predictably "woman episodes." I've seen both Troy and Crusher kick ass—but when they star they swoon, they fall for mysterious strangers who sap them of life a little a time, etc.

/geek

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 7:16pm

As far as I can remember, as soon as Q appeared (or maybe his second appearance) the fans started buzzing with the notion that he was in some way connected with Trelane. This built and built and sort of achieved the closest thing to canon with the Peter David novel.

Sadly for fans of the notion, tie-ins are on a lower canon level, and years later the Berman-run Trek head office, in one of its periodic frenzies of TOS-hate, declared it not to be so.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 7:28pm

Beverly Crusher had three of my favorite episodes, the one where everyone is disappearing, the one where they keep blowing up, and the one where she has to solve the locked door mystery. Troi has the one with no one dreaming and going nuts and the hydrogen, while Geordi was always falling all over himself over some holodeck girl, murderous ensign or Mommy and Riker fell in love with a hologram and an androgynous person. I think you're being a little selective in your memory there. Everybody swooned, but Beverly had some of the most badass episodes of all time.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)A Little Touch of Schmilsson

3/13/09 7:55pm

Then again, Beverly was also in that godawful "ghost lover" Anne Rice ripoff episode.

The only good thing about that was the fact that the "Scottish Planet" had as its governor (or whatever his title was) an alien who had fallen in love with all this Scottish business. That was funny, otherwise the episode is one of TNG's all-time cringefests.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:58pm

Delicious Star Trek food

Whenever they eat on the old Trek series, they always seem to be eating small colored foam blocks, or sometimes plates of raw celery or vegetables. So I think the food on the Enterprise sucks. It sets up a hilarious line (to me) in Space Seed, when McCoy comments on the "spread", which looks awful.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/13/09 2:13pm

Beat me to it, partd. Who wouldn't want a home cooked meal after surviving on Day-glo cubes for a while. (although there's an upcoming ep where the synthesizer makes chicken soup. Food Unit 2.0 perhaps.)

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)partdavid

3/13/09 7:32pm

That is one of the strangest things about TOS, and it really makes no sense.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)partdavid

3/13/09 7:37pm

Well, and nobody ever seems to have to go to the bathroom.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)partdavid

3/13/09 10:00pm

(action music) (door sf)

(Kirk comes out of bathroom)

"DON'T....go in there for a while."

Yes, I've descended to poo jokes.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/13/09 11:59pm

Didn't they have that little retractable sink and mirror in TOS? Musta been a space toidy somewhere near there.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)partdavid

3/14/09 2:36am

I always assumed they beamed it out of you.

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)partdavid

3/14/09 4:33am

McCoy says something about it being nice not to have "reconstituted food" at the beginning of the episode. I've also noted in the last few episodes that there seems to be a Yeoman passing out drinks (coffee?) on the bridge a lot.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)partdavid

3/14/09 8:58pm

"although there's an upcoming ep where the synthesizer makes chicken soup"

Yeah, but it's full of Tribbles.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/15/09 12:10am

That's right, but army guy who beamed up from the '60s got real soup.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [El Zilcho](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 11:24am

Memories from my childhood

Back when I was in middle school, a friend of mine wrote a fan fiction about Trelane, and Q, positing that Trelane was Q's son or something. It wasn't very good, but I'm always reminded of it when "The Squire of Gothos" comes up. Also, this was about the time that GoldenEye came out, and he was also a big fan of Alec Trevelyan. This being the beginning days of AIM, he chose the screen name "Trevor Lane," and always denied that it was an amalgamation of "Trelane" and "Trevelyan."

"Arena" is just a stone-classic. It's got one of the most iconic aliens in all of Trek. We get to see some good rough-and-tumble Kirk. It's probably one of my favorite TOS episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 11:52am

It's funny that you mention it- I never read it, but there WAS a book made that makes Trelane a Q, although not Q's son. Looking at the episode and thinking of Q, you can easily see the connection.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 12:01pm

There was (and I'm kind of embarrassed to admit I know this) a TNG novel by Peter David called "Q Squared" that states Trelane is a Q, and also suggests he's Q's illegitimate son. Not sure if that's the same book you're referring to or not Right Wingnut, but that was the one I thought of. It's total fanservice and a fairly fun read.

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 12:06pm

Well, I'm pretty sure my friend wasn't Peter David, unless Peter David was a 13 year old Korean American. Still, it seems like the exact same story. Maybe my buddy was a plagiarist.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 12:10pm

Or possibly it's just an obvious idea?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 12:55pm

Heh—El Zilcho, I meant my reply for Right Wingnut actually, and I wasn't trying to impugn your friend or anything. And I'm sure his story was hardly the only fanfic to make that obvious assumption about Q/Trelane.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 7:52pm

When Q showed up in the pilot, I tuned right out saying, 'Oh Quire of Gothos redux'...

I opnly caught up with the series on DVD because of this (though I have come to enjoy 'Q'— mostly due to the performance by de Lancie— it's an obvious retread) I thought it was just too early to be redoing ideas like that..

Of course, I'd yet to the the 'Naked' time TNG which came soon after...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Zilcho

3/13/09 7:52pm

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[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:09pm

I'm Ignorant!

Since the issue has been raised, can someone explain to me the classic 3 and 5 act drama structure?

While you all were in film school I was preparing for a lifetime in the cubicle trades.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 12:51pm

I think it's three acts, by the way. I was reading some blog posts by one of the ST:TNG writers recently.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 2:08pm

Act I: Setup

Act II: Conflict

Act III: Resolution

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 2:35pm

Tinsel-

That sounds straightforward. What about the 5?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 3:21pm

You're thinking about TV Act breaks for commercials, rather than dramatic structure. The 5-Act structure used to be the standard for one-hour drama, but these days you find all kinds of odd act structures. A popular one these days is the 6-Act structure, with a long Open, and two short "mini-Acts" in the middle.

As part of the recent re-do, these Star Treks have been "re-broken" to add another commercial break, sometimes at the expense of story continuity.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 3:53pm

David Gerrold (sp?) author of Trouble w/Tribbs was instructed that before every commercial break there must be a cliff-hanger of some sort with someone in jeopardy. He hated how it messed with any logical sense of story progression.

All Shakespeare plays have 5 acts, fwiw.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 4:11pm

It goes like this:

act 0/prologue

[commercial]

act 1

[commercial]

act 2

[commercial]

act 3

[credits].

(Yes, that's real. Yes, 3 act structure in television has an act 0. No, it doesn't help your understanding of the show at all)

Alternately, in movies:

Act 1: The beginning

Act 2: Where most of the stuff happens

Act 3: The end

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 7:46pm

Don't forget the 'bumpers'!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/13/09 7:47pm

Don't forget the 'bumpers'!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 1:23pm

Standard rock and dirt planet?

A couple of other people above have identified the battleground for Kirk and the Gorn as the Vasquez Rocks in the Antelope Valley section of Los Angeles county and I'd just like to add that I really like the use of location in this episode. I realize that it seems somewhat similar to a lot of other locations on TOS, but in this case I think they made great use of the rocks. At one point, when Kirk is climbing up to push a boulder, it looks pretty precarious.

It's also appropriate for the show since Edwards Air Force Base in the Antelope Valley is where the first space shuttles landed.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 2:52pm

The reason it seems similar to a lot of TOS locations is because the show used Vasquez Rocks pretty regularly as a location. It was easy to get to and served as any number of "alien" locales for a show shooting on the cheap.

Trivia you probably already know time: Bill and Ted's Bogus Journey has B&T watching "Arena" early in the movie, then being duped by evil robot replicas and taken to the exact same location at Vasquez rocks where Kirk is seen climbing the long finger of rock. One of the earliest bits of meta I can remember seeing at the movies.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 7:41pm

I erm, read somewhere that Vasquez Rocks is a very good place to drop acid...

Not that I recommend that sort of thing...

Also, much laughter can be had from tripping friends by saying things like 'Captain Kirk...!' in a Gorn voice and words like 'Rudimentary lathe'

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 7:41pm

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[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 7:41pm

Whoops! Flashback!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 7:41pm

Whoops! Flashback!

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 4:42am

It is also the filming location of the worse musical ever made.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 4:44pm

Pain Thine Wagon?

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Breakfast Balls

3/15/09 5:09pm

I bet any place would be great to drop acid provided they were filming a fight there between William Shatner and a lizard man at the time.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 1:14pm

Memorable episodes

These are two of the episode I remember best as a kid because each had a scene that either freaked me out or outright terrified me. In "Squire," it was during the trial when they showed the silhouette of the noose, for some reason that creeped me out more than showing an actual noose. With "Arena," of course, it was every scene with the Gorn, but I was particularly freaking out during the scene when Kirk was trying to finish his gun, and the Gorn was getting closer and closer the whole time. I'm so glad I got to see this show when I was a kid, it's great as an adult, but not realizing that guys like Kirk were never going to die made the show that much more exciting.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)scotteb

3/13/09 7:15pm

I remember being afraid of the shadow of the noose as well, as a kid. But when I saw it as an adult it cracked me up. Psychoanalysis could probably make much of this.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)scotteb

3/13/09 7:42pm

Seconds on that noose!

Didn't they do that again at some point? In the Salem witch trials one, or in the Wild West?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)scotteb

3/13/09 7:42pm

Seconds on that noose!

Didn't they do that again at some point? In the Salem witch trials one, or in the Wild West?

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)scotteb

3/13/09 10:01pm

The Billy the Kid one?

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)scotteb

3/14/09 4:39am

There are a lot of theatrical elements to "Squire." The shadow of the noose and the shrinking spotlight at the end being the most evident. But also note how the staging of the trial scene feels. Like a Twilight Zone episode, I think you could move "Squire" to the stage without having to change much.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)scotteb

3/14/09 9:03pm

TZ used that shadow effect quite often, and to great effect. I.E. the shadow of the Jack in the Box in "It's a Good Life" was probably more disturbing than anything they could have shown.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 11:31am

Nubian

Assuming your question is not sarcastic, a Nubian is an old-timey way of referring to someone of African descent. I think the region of Nubia was in Egypt and possibly more areas of Eastern Africa. I don't think it was meant to be offensive, but it's probably not something you should throw into causal conversation.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 11:37am

I'm actually quoting a movie. :)

[Reply](#)

- [imnotfredmcgriff](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 12:30pm

darth vader is a nubian. a nubian god, specifcially.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 2:05pm

What a relief. I was hoping it wasn't serious and spared a "haven't you heard of Google" rant.

[Reply](#)

- [Cultural Reference](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 2:16pm

It was a great Kevin Smith quote.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 2:36pm

Ahh, that splains it. I'm always distracted by Smith's obsession with guys sucking cock to notice much else.

[Reply](#)



- [Poor Poor Bob](#)Breakfast Balls

3/13/09 3:48pm

"Why aren't the police breaking the doors down right now?"

"Wrong coast."

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Breakfast Balls

3/14/09 12:22am

"What's a Nubian?"

"Not much, what'sa nubian w/ you?"

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:51pm

Godlike energy beings.

I've always felt like the Star Trek creative team was into god-like enemies/challenges was because it forces the crew to confront a seemingly unstoppable opponent. In the end they have to use reason and creativity to overcome raw power, which shows a basic faith that we mere mortals can overcome some pretty big problems (one of the things I like about the show).

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/13/09 2:48pm

I thought it was because it allowed them to work within their budgetary restrictions by using existing sets. Why a Star Trek episode set in a Regency drawing room? Um... omnipotent god-being?

[Reply](#)

- [Benjamin\\_Barker](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/13/09 4:24pm

It's both. Form meets function.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/13/09 7:12pm

Hey, Dumbledore Calrissian — just wanted to let you know your handle is freaking awesome. I just about peed my pants at the expression on Dwight's face when Jim was doing his BSG shpiel.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/13/09 7:45pm

I agree that it's both, but Lurin would be right on as to the proximity of the Desilu Studios to the Paramount backlot... Space Western anyone? Gangsters?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/13/09 7:45pm

I agree that it's both, but Lurin would be right on as to the proximity of the Desilu Studios to the Paramount backlot... Space Western anyone? Gangsters?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Towelie McTowelson](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 1:42pm

blahh

Anyone who enjoys Star Trek probably enjoys forcible sodomy from their uncle also.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 2:20pm

I love Trek but my uncle takes it consensually.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 2:33pm

Whereas I dislike Star Trek, but enjoy forced intercourse.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 2:36pm

I wonder what the Internet was like before trolls...

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 3:41pm

Trolling in the Usenet and Fidonet days required a lot more finesse.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 4:40pm

that's like asking what the universe was like before the Big Bang.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Towelie McTowelson.

3/13/09 7:16pm

It depends on the uncle...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Pete Townshend](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 10:30pm

Tommy!

Tommy

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Pete Townshend

3/13/09 11:42pm

That Tommy/mirror ref was a bit of a shoehorn. Took me a while to figure out. (Now if he had mentioned Anne-Margaret writhing on a phallic bolster covered in chocolate and baked beans...)

[Reply](#)

- [Pete Townshend](#)Pete Townshend

3/14/09 12:50am

Your of course speaking of her role in Santa Clause 3: The escape clause. A true classic

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Pete Townshend

3/15/09 12:11am

Hee hee, of course, Pete!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 1:06pm

William Campbell, Best Omnipotent Being in TOS...  
...but worst Klingon.

Watch him scuttle away sheepishly at the end of "The Trouble With Tribbles".

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

3/13/09 7:14pm

YES! I remember figuring that out, and thinking, "Nah..." and letting it go. Thank you for confirming my long-held (and then long-forgotten) theory!

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

3/14/09 4:34am

So maybe the whole Tibbles episode was Trelane trying to get revenge on the Enterprise?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 3:24pm

Oh for Christ's sake...

"Arena" is a C+ at best. Do you seriously think it's a better episode than "Where No Man..." or "The Menagerie"?

Bleeeech!

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Lord Running Clam

3/13/09 7:17pm

We're going to the beach?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Lord Running Clam

3/15/09 2:29pm

Sorry, guys. I meant to type "Yasmin Bleeeeeeth!"

[Reply](#)

- [alkh3myst](#)Zack Handlen

12/16/16 7:56pm

Gosh, a professional blogger doesn't know how to use Google to find out what a Nubian is? Since the Nubians were an important part of Ancient Egyptian civilization, it's sad that Zack Handlen's never heard of them.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)alkh3myst

3/18/17 5:17pm

Gosh, a commenter on a pop culture site doesn't know that saying "what's a Nubian?" is actually a jokey quote from a Kevin Smith movie, and not an actual plea for an answer as to what Nubians are?

It's always sad when someone thinks that they're making a big demonstration of shaming someone for their ignorance while really just demonstrating their own.

[Reply](#)

- [Codename Workerbee](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:36pm

the wobbles

Squire of Gothos has a perfect example of one of my favorite Trek lapses in production quality...the wobbly attempts at people being frozen. It's pretty common in TV to see people wiggle a tiny bit, but Trek characters sway like bored Groomsmen.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Codename Workerbee

3/13/09 7:11pm

Interesting simile. I'd always assumed the groomsmen were drunk.

[Reply](#)

- [bhar48069](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 2:48pm

Definition of "Nubian"

"Nubian" just means that Uhura is from that ethnic group in Sudan. Trelane was just saying that she is black.

[Reply](#)

- [cigarette](#)bhar48069

1/17/15 10:06pm

Six years later... "What's a Nubian?" is a joke from *Mallrats*.

[Reply](#)

- [jonhanson](#)cigarette

3/20/17 5:19pm

Two years later... "What's a Nubian?" is a joke from Chasing Amy.

[Reply](#)

- [Cigarette](#)jonhanson

3/20/17 6:01pm

Well played, Clerk.

[Reply](#)

- [BradTheBiggestDad](#)Zack Handlen

10/19/16 4:33pm

"Squire" works masterfully by ratcheting up the tension in its final act before springing its farcical "ultimate beings" on us in the episode's resolution, but "Arena", while still entertaining, suffers from unintended tonal whiplash that ends up feeling like the writers penned another "Squire" without intending to do so.

I was waiting the entire episode for Kirk to point out to the Metrons that they behave just as "savagely" as the Federation or the Gorn, that pitting two people against each other in reality-show hand-to-hand combat is in no way morally superior to warfare, not when both of the fighters are simply duty-bound officers swept up in a conflict they themselves don't understand. In fact, it seems more like the Metrons were bored with warfare by ship and shell and just wanted to see some down-and-dirty, inferior-being action between an ape and a giant lizard, just like Trelane from "Squire" (or the show's real-life audience) might want.

The climax seems to be leading toward this: Kirk tells these supreme beings that they'll "have to get [their] entertainment somewhere else", then notes with surprise that the Metron who appears bodily looks, to Kirk's eyes, like a child. But the Metron's speech about the trait of mercy still gets taken seriously by both Kirk and the episode, while better TOS scripts would have shown Kirk mercilessly upbraiding the "superior" sort for the hypocrisy and sadism of their supposed test. I suppose we could read into this that Kirk is tired enough that he's willing to humor these kooks, but that's not really to be found in the episode either. Oh, well.

[Reply](#)

- [Don Marz](#)Zack Handlen

2/04/16 5:31am

While I'm commenting to no one on lost reviews of decades-old TV episodes: I always appreciated how the two captains' improvised weapons in "Arena" paralleled their tactics at the beginning of the show: the Gorn lays a trap, while Kirk lobbs a missile. This corresponds in turn to their presentation: the Gorn captain's reptilian sluggishness vs. Kirk's mammalian heat. And yet, the episode manages to keep the lizard man looking both clever and semi-justified. It's one of the better uses of Star Trek clichés about the unexpected.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 12:56pm

Right on about Trelane and childlike gods

This episode is also a great example to me of why originality is often overrated. The plot here isn't terribly original or creative, even within the confines of Star Trek. But it's all about the execution.

[Reply](#)

- [DSL](#)Zack Handlen

11/26/16 10:34pm

The cartoony, disintegrating-alarm-clock sound effects as Trelane's "instrumentality" mirror shatters from Kirk's dueling-pistol shot are for me a minor bright spot in this outing. Boi-oi-oi-oi-oing!

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/16 11:23pm

Do you see or feel or do I smash the mirror?-Tommy

I say we take off and nuke the entire site from orbit. It's the only way to be sure.- Ripley and Hicks

[Reply](#)

- [A Rising Ape](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 9:45pm

Props

Are given for making effective use of a Tiny Toons reference, and for managing it good decade after they ceased to be culturally relevant, no less.

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Zack Handlen

3/13/09 7:30pm

Really interesting take

I'm not sure I'd put Squire so far above Charlie X, or, consider it superior at all...but I like the article.

[Reply](#)

- [wytzox1](#)Zack Handlen

10/20/16 12:26pm

Odd how Trelane seemed rather Liberace-esque which added to the episode's humor! ♣

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" / "Court Martial"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 20, 2009

[Comments \(148\)](#)



I spent most of this week on jury duty, so a thousand pardons if my brain is somewhat fried at this point; having to sit and have things slowly explained to you for six hours a day (give or take) tends to make your focus want to get drunk and jump off a bridge. For example of how bad it's gotten, I spent twenty minutes trying to find some clever way of connecting my experience in court with the second episode of this week's double header, but I couldn't make a go of it. Something about how our prosecuting attorney wasn't nearly as blond as Areel Shaw? Or how I really wish we could've spent the final day of the trial sitting on the bridge of a starship. Nothing stuck. And I'm the kind of guy who can find connections all over the place.

But while I'm sure part of my fogginess right now is due to endless arguments and sidebars, I don't think either "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" or "Court Martial" really did me much in the way of favors, concentration-wise. We've had a good run for the past few weeks; it was inevitable we'd eventually get stuck with a pair of so-so eps. It could've been worse, (And given that there's still "The Alternative Factor" left to cover this season, it *will* be worse soon enough.) but there's a certain excitement lacking here. Without depth or thematic cleverness, "Yesterday" and "Court" are decent plodders without much in the way of romance. I don't mean "So, *did* Kirk screw this one or *will* Kirk screw this one?" romance; I mean the genuine thrill that comes when all the pieces come together and the sum is greater than the parts. Both eps are missing that, and given the state of my current cogitations, it's no wonder I'm finding it difficult to get a grip on things.

"Yesterday" is about time travel, one of the boilerplate sci-fi (syfy?) concepts that manages to crop up in just about any show it legitimately can. We get a nice fake out in the opening, with '60's looking military men catching sight of a massive blip on the radar and sending a plane out to investigate; the plane finds the Enterprise flying through the sky, which is somewhat of a shock. The impact is lessened by the hilariously awful visual—I'm willing to cut the series a huge amount of slack when it comes to the effects work, given the limited budget and means of the period, but this is just embarrassingly goofy. Plus the dimensions are all wrong, and I can't help but wonder how in hell the Enterprise would even handle being subject to Earth's gravity? It's a giant freaking space-ship. Surely it wasn't designed for that sort of strain.

We cut to the bridge, where everyone is struggling to find their bearings. Kirk has Sulu move the ship into orbit around Earth, but not before they're forced to beam aboard the airman who came to check out the UFO. We get a passable explanation for the time-jump—the Enterprise passed by a black star, the gravitational pull sucked them towards it, and in breaking free, they were snapped forward like a rubber band and hurled into the past. (No mention is made of the earlier time travel in "Naked Time," but it's not like we were expecting any.) Now they're stuck in the "late 1960's," which means there's no Starfleet to report to, and no future resources to help Scotty get the engine back to full power. Not that he really needs any help, of course. This is Scotty. If you gutted the lower decks and handed him a tuning fork, he'd have you at warp 9 inside an hour.

Still, we need some kind of conflict, which is where John Christopher comes in. When the Enterprise sensors caught him observing the ship in his Interceptor, Spock realized that his plane could have nuclear tipped warheads on-board, missiles that would severely damage the ship in her weakened state. Without taking time to consider, Kirk immediately locks a tractor beam onto the Interceptor, holding it in place; but the plane can't withstand the pressure of the beam, and it breaks up into the atmosphere. This leaves Kirk no choice but to beam Christopher on board, at which point things get tricky because of causality and paradox issues. As Spock explains, Christopher's rapidly increasing knowledge of the future (Kirk all but leads him on a tour of the Enterprise) could have serious repercussions on future events, which is where we'll all be living our lives, in the future.

I'm not a huge fan of "Yesterday," as the "modern day" sequences, though decently written, are pretty dull; you never really feel like any of our heroes are in danger, and the fact that "present" Earth seems to exist in an endless series of gray rooms and hallways means that there's not much visual panache on display. But Spock's arguments about the dangers Christopher—and anyone else who stumbles across the Enterprise—represent are well-considered. I'm not sure I buy that Christopher, on seeing that space travel is possible and (gasp!) women are involved, could somehow parlay that knowledge into investments and monetary gain; it's not like someone hands him a Gray's Sports Almanac. But when you're dealing with that large a potential for damage, playing it safe makes sense.

Initially Kirk and company plan on bringing Christopher with them back to the future, as Spock's initial research shows that Christopher failed to make any significant contribution to history before his death. Christopher isn't much happy at the idea, for obvious reasons, but lucky for him Spock likes to double check his work; and while the pilot himself may be a nobody, his son—the son his wife has yet to be impregnated with, if you get me—is captain of the first manned Earth-Saturn probe, which is very important indeed. Instead of just finding a way to get rid of the pictures that Christopher's plane took before it went ker-splat, Kirk and his crew also have to figure out how to return the captain back home, in order that he may keep up the good fight of rogering the wife and instilling the fear of God and country in the babies that result from said rogering.

In a way, "Yesterday" is a bit like a dry-run for *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, mostly in the over-the-top comedic reactions we get from military men caught up in the Enterprise's woes. Christopher plays it straight, but there's an MP inadvertently beamed up to the ship who spends his time there in a frozen double take, as well as the MPs down on the planet who question Kirk and don't like the answers he gives. It's funny enough ("I'm going to lock you away for two hundred years." "That ought to be about right.") but it's middling stuff, and none of the issues raised in the ep ever get beyond mildly concerning. Plus the resolution doesn't hold up at all; once Spock figures out how to shoot the Enterprise into the future (a sun slingshot which, unless I'm mistaken, is what they use in *Voyage*), it becomes possible to set Christopher back into his plane right before it broke apart, with no memory of how he got there or what happened to him. There's no way that makes sense.

But hey, you know what does make sense? A court martial! And wouldn't you know it, that just happens to be—ah, screw it, I hate myself, let's just pretend I've made the segue clean and move on with our lives. "Court Martial" stays in the era of Starfleet, but don't expect much in the way of exciting environments; the action here is restricted to the Enterprise and—surprise, surprise—the gray as hell rooms of Starbase 11. The sci-fi concepts we see here are just decorations on a straightforward, disappointingly predictable script, and while there's a definite drama in the idea of seeing our hero's integrity and ability put into question by his peers, that drama is negated by the black-and-white nature of the results. Of course Kirk didn't eject anyone too early. Hell, as it turns out, he didn't eject anyone at all.



I guess that could use some context. Much like "Yesterday," "Court" starts with a good five minutes of the plot already in the past. (Whatever problems I have with both episodes, I do like that kind of set-up; it helps create the illusion that the action of the series doesn't begin and end with the credits.) After passing through a deadly ion storm, the Enterprise has lost a crew-member by the name of Ben Finney. Kirk's filing the relevant reports at the Starbase, and it appears to be a routine, though tragic, matter; Finney was inside an observation pod per regulations during the storm, and when the storm became too dangerous, Kirk was forced to eject the pod after putting the ship on red alert. Everything went down by-the-book, at least until Spock beams down with the computer logs. That's when Commodore Stone discovers that, Kirk's own report to the contrary, the computer recorded that the pod (with Finney inside) was ejected *before* the red alert was called, giving Finney insufficient time to escape. At best, that makes Kirk out to be incompetent—at worst, he's a murderer.

Word travels fast; hilariously, when Kirk and McCoy take a trip to the local watering hole, half the people there know Kirk and have set their minds on a guilty verdict. (This seems to have been done mostly to increase the tension; I'm not sure I buy that James T.'s colleagues would despise him so readily, unless there was some kind of jealousy involved.) But Kirk isn't backing down, not even in the somewhat terrifying face of Finney's grieving daughter, Jamie. (It's not the actress I object to so much as her embarrassingly misguided outfit. I guess the ribbon was supposed to make her look more childish?) Stone gives him an out, offering to put in the record that it was simply a mistake brought on from over-work and physical exhaustion, but Kirk won't have it. A mistake would most likely end his career, and he doesn't believe he made one. So off to trial things go; and wouldn't you know it, but one of Kirk's old flames, Areel, just happens to be around to present the case for the prosecution.

Oh man, here's as good a place as any to mention it—the dialogue is incredibly ripe in this episode, from the meandering, inane burlblings between Kirk and Areel, to the so-called inspiration speeches from that mountain of mediocrity, Samuel T. Cogley, Attorney at Law. See, Samuel was recommended to Kirk by Areel (because even though she's going to do her level best to break him, she still wants Kirk to win), and he's got all those quirky edges that old lawyers always have in movies. Get ready to be amazed: he carries his whole law library around with him wherever he goes, and once he takes Kirk on as a client, he moves all his books into Kirk's apartment! Never mind the fact that nothing in those books ever really matters to the case; because Kirk is at the mercy of a computer log, we're supposed to be charmed by Cogley's contempt for modern technology. (The only person who pull of this kind of shit was Giles on *Buffy*, and he did it one speech.)

Cogley's played by Elisha Cook, Jr., who does as well as can be expected with the material provided. There's something off, though; I can't help wondering if he dropped out of filming before the episode was complete, or if the show couldn't afford him, because after his big speech at the end of the second act, he disappears entirely. Various characters mention him to explain his absence, but given the prominence of his introduction, a two line send off at the end seems inadequate. Anybody know the story on this? The only thing I can find is that Cook had trouble remembering his lines—which suggests but doesn't really explain.

We get a trial, and as is always the way with movie trials, it goes down like a fight in a *Rocky* sequel, with Kirk up against the ropes until the very last minute when Spock, per the usual, saves his ass. Areel presents her case through Spock, McCoy, and an unnamed crew-woman, and while all are clearly supportive of the captain, each one is forced to bury him a little deeper. And Cogley refuses to cross-examine any of them, which made me think of that bit on the *Simpsons* when Marge's pretzel business attracts the fury of the local mob *and* the yakuza; there's that one guy who just stands there the whole fight, and like Homer says, you just know he's going to do something cool, but we never get to see it. In "Court," we do get to see Cogley go all oratorical, but only after Spock makes his last minute discovery; otherwise, he just calls Kirk to the stand and before having his case destroyed by a video of the bridge. (A video with multiple camera angles, that no one bothered to mention till the big courtroom reveal. Wouldn't that've been the first thing they looked at when the computer and Kirk disagreed?)

Getting bogged down here—to sum up, Ben Finney, with whom Kirk has A Past, is alive after all. He faked his death and while everybody was searching for him, re-programmed the computer to ruin Kirk; Spock figures this out when he tests the computer by playing some chess against it. This episode was mostly a wash for me, but I dearly loved Spock's

reasoning—since he programmed the computer to play chess, with all he knows of the game, the best he should've been able to achieve against it was a draw. That he failed to achieve this, that he actually *won*, means that somebody's been doing some re-adjusting. The only people with the authorization to do that are Kirk, Spock, and wouldn't you know it, Finney himself. (This seems convenient, to say the least. Given what we're told about Finney's career trajectory after Kirk caught him in error years before, he's not doing so great; but you'd think that being one of the three people on the ship qualified to do something would be pretty high cotton, especially considering that the other two are the ship's captain and first officer.)

To track Ben down, Kirk does a test with the ship's speakers to catch the heart-beats on the Enterprise. It's a nice "Tell-Tale Heart" moment that falls apart the as soon as you think about it—this is the best way to pinpoint the location of a crewman? God forbid you have to do it in space. Kirk goes after Finney, the ship is in danger, they struggle, Finney breaks, Kirk saves the day, the charges are dropped, ice cream for everyone, and so on. The final fist-fight between Kirk and Finney killed whatever dramatic tension the episode had managed to create, even if you overlooked the obvious stunt doubles. The fact that Kirk, as a starship captain, is held to a higher standard is a strong concept with a lot of potential; it's come up more than once on the series, and it's used to try and heighten the danger for our hero here. But it's just a false trail in the end, because unlike the other episodes, Kirk's fallibility is never really the issue. He was framed, he made no mistakes, so the good guys are good and the bad guys are bad. Not many places you can go from there.

Both "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" and "Court Martial" are passable, but there's something missing. It's always tricky to find what separates the average from the awesome, but I think what we're looking at here is a distinct and painful lack of giant talking rabbits, freakish bald children, and SPACE LIZARDS. *Trek* doesn't need the extra touches to work beautifully (as we'll see in a couple weeks, it can do just fine with human drama, thank you very much), but when the writing is merely competent and the stories don't shine, you need something to hold your attention. Apart from that horrible shot of the tiny Enterprise in the sky, and Ben Finney's uncanny resemblance to Willem Dafoe, there wasn't much to go on here.

#### Grades:

"Tomorrow Is Yesterday": B-

"Court Martial": B-

#### Stray Observations:

- Gotta love Christopher's shocked "A woman?!?" when he and Kirk walk by a skirt on their way to the bridge. Surely he's seen one before.
- Well, it looks like we've got food synthesizers on the Enterprise capable of creating chicken soup. Even better, there's a bunch of them in the transporter room. Is it really necessary to have food in there?
- The Enterprise sure does have a lot of Finneys.
- Up next week, "The Return Of The Archons" and "A Taste Of Armageddon."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (147)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Fighter Hayabusa](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:08am

In an interstellar burst I am back to save the universe

Picard is better than Kirk

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 10:46am

And Sisko is better than Picard.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:02am

And Parkay is better than Imperial.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:21am

And New Coke is better than Classic.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:24am

YOU TAKE THAT BACK!

[Reply](#)

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:32am

I can't believe it's not butter!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:34am

And Janeway is better than Archer. Actually everyone's better than Archer. Even Pike. In a chair. With a yes/no light.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:41am

Well that's a given, yeah.

[Reply](#)

- [Cyborg Duck Penis Panda Cat](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:48am

Way to ruin the franchise, Bakula.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:55am

Poor Scott Bakula. You have to wonder, was it really his fault, or the writers? In my kind heart, I like to blame the latter.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:03pm

Well yes, the writing was awful. But so was he. I mean, surely, SURELY if you are going to be a captain in Star Trek the first thing you learn to do is to deliver dialogue convincingly to the viewing screen on the bridge? But no, wooden and uncomfortable line reading ensues every time. I know it's obvious to rag on Enterprise, and Bakula is absolutely not

the only reason the show failed, but he did do his bit. He just isn't convincing as the pioneer and captain that he's supposed to be.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:08pm

I was fine with Bakky at the beginning (and the writers managed to work in enough moments of pointless shirtlessness) but eventually he began reading every line in the same intense repressed angry growl, no matter what. When he became the anti-Archer where that might have been appropriate, it was way too late.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:19pm

Way WAY too late! Also, Tinsel, he's just not my type, so the pointless shirtless moments dont help to cushion the leaden line delivery nor the nagging feeling that he felt faintly embarassed to be there. And from a man that used to helm Quantum Leap...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:30pm

So true, if ever there was a role that demanded range and versatility it was Quantum.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:34pm

I could make a snarky Dollhouse reference here, but I shall restrain myself...

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:34pm

My personal gripes about Enterprise aside, I would put the four seasons of Enterprise up against Voyager any day. Janeway better than Archer? The Kazon a good villain? Fucking please! Enterprise has issues, but it is still fun to watch...Voyager is torturous.

Enterprise is also the Trek show that paid the most respect to TOS. Andorians, Gorn, Tellarites, Vulcans, Tholians, Mirror Universe, Organians...it definitely had some good stuff in there.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:44pm

This remind me of an email I once got from some guys at MIT of reasons why Captain Picard is better than Captain Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 12:55pm

@Master Blaster:

I think we can all agree that the Kazon were indeed dreadful villains and in no way a worthy entry into the Star Trek universe. But I'll always take Janeway over Archer - she WAS the captain of Voyager in a way that Bakula just wasn't. Yes she could be camp and silly, but she really could deliver the goods (Scorpion, Year Of Hell) when required. Also, flawed though Voyager's finale was, Enterprise's was awful. Just... awful. I mean it's not my favourite branch of the

franchise, but it should, if cancelled, at least have gotten a decent send off, not Troi and Riker turning up for poorly-executed cameos and the completely abrupt death of the show's only genuinely compelling character.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 1:15pm

To say nothing of inventing a "beloved" character of the Cook for the last ep who's conveniently everyone's favorite confidante.

Who dies, Phlox?

I still defend the later eps of Voyager. Once 7of9 showed up, it really took off. And speaking of time travel, who can't love the Matt Frewer ep?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 1:54pm

Trip dies, and it's not the worst death...but it's not the best, either.

See Prole, I like Archer because he dukes it out with the bad guys and reminds me a bit of Kirk. He's no Kirk or Picard, I'll grant, but I didn't think Sisko or Janeway were strong captains, either. People claim Sisko is awesome, and I have yet to watch the entirety of DS9, but there's a reason Worf was brought on board, and that reason was Avery Brooks...he wasn't delivering the goods.

Anyway, I think people are unfairly critical of Enterprise because of some fairly minor nitpicks, all the while remembering the TNG era with a bit of exaggeration. The Enterprise cast is fairly solid (they take a while to grow on you) and there isn't really a Harry Kim, B'ellana, Tom Paris, Kira, or Dax to bore the shit out of you. I suppose it's all a matter of taste, but the thing I like about Enterprise as a TOS fan is that it acknowledges the original series, and builds on some of that mythology. As much as I love TNG, they pretty much took the Klingons and Romulans and acted as if the rest of the show didn't exist.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 2:06pm

Voyager just flat-out sucked. Enterprise had promise, but that stupid Xindi story arc killed it dead. Trek had enough established canon to keep Enterprise going strong without inventing a whole new antagonist.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 2:36pm

See, I thought the Xindi season was the strongest of them all, although it was very complicated and had to be followed closely and in order.

Every incarnation since TOS has always had half the main characters I couldn't stand - Harry Kim, T'Pol, Kes, Tasha Yar for starters. (But I \*loved\* the first Dax.)

[Reply](#)

- [Lev](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 2:38pm

Worf was brought on board DS9 not because of Avery Brooks per se, but because there was a desire to "shake things up" to compete with Voyager and other encroachers like Babylon 5. And it wound up working pretty well—the Worf years were clearly the show's best, though things began to pick up once the Defiant arrived.

And the problem with Voyager wasn't necessarily that the aliens sucked—some did, but the Vidi'ans (those organ harvesting guys) were pretty cool, and the Hirogen hunters and Species 8472, let alone the Borg, were just fine. The

problem with Voyager was that it overrelied on the same three or four story ideas—the Borg, the Holodeck, time travel, and The Doctor and 7 of 9's relationship. Every time the show tried to do anything outside of these categories it failed abysmally, and those categories got tired by the end.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 2:43pm

Pretty much nothing can knock Voyager of the "worst Trek ever" throne. The string of toying-with-continuity episodes that Enterprise did in its fourth season (its best if you ignore the finale; I really think a fifth season would have been even better) alone put it above Voyager.

I blame Enterprises problems on the entrenched policies of the Berman-controlled Trek head office; getting Coto in was good move, if too late.

Overall, DS9 is a better show than TNG, which ratchets up the sappy-suckiness way more than one remembers when re-watched.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 3:05pm

I need to watch all of DS9. I've heard the Dominion stuff is pretty sweet, but I haven't seen much of it. I would argue, indeed, that Worf injected much needed testosterone into DS9 because Avery Brooks wasn't doing it. He had two modes...lovesick puppy with his girlfriend (which was almost indistinguishable from soft-spoken, doting father mode) and stammering, angry guy...the latter being more funny than formidable.

I'm currently watching Season 4 of TNG, and they get pretty damn consistently good around Season Three, but there are still some clunkers and misses. Those who crap on Enterprise should go back and rewatch TNG for perspective. There isn't as much continuity tinkering in Enterprise as is claimed, and way more in those TNG-era shows than is often mentioned, or remembered.

I, too, liked the Xindi arc, but my main beef with Enterprise is that they really, really needed to go to war with the Klingons instead.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 3:48pm

I agree with Prole Hole. While Voyager became nearly unwatchable, and Enterprise is always mildly entertaining, Janeway was a better captain than Archer, or rather Mulgrew put more into it than Bakula.

Really, however, DS9 was the peak of Star Trekkiness. They should have quit after that and waited 20 years for Abrams to reboot the franchise, instead of squeezing the life out of it.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 4:09pm

Now, I did get a kick out of Bride of Chaotica. It was probably the best Holodeck-Gets-Screwed-Up episode in Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 7:02pm

Note: as soon as they let Brooks grow facial hair (a process that reached fruition when they let him shave his head), Sisko became a much more active, forceful and just generally better character.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 7:06pm

George: I kind of prefer "Our Man Bashir" for that subgenre of latter-day Trek story.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 7:48pm

I'm actually a fan of Enterprise, with no caveats, besides that the theme song was crime against humanity... The Xindi arc is where it got really good for me...

I've seen all TNG (though I'm rewatching now, halfway through season 2 and it's getting better)..

I've seen a couple of seasons of DS9, the first and a later one, and liked it OK, and I've seen a couple of seasons of Voyager, the first and the seventh.

A good friend of mine here in France said something interesting: All Star Trek series (besides TOS) get good after the fourth season (he's seen them all)...

Just something to think about when you're pissing on Enterprise. What would you say about TNG if it had ended after season 4?

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 8:03pm

Facial hair. It made Riker better, Sisko better, Spock better, Adama better. It's the gift that keeps on giving.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/20/09 11:31pm

Which would have been perfect.

Although when DS9 started out, I thought they intended Sisko to be Slick Willie (the San Francisco mayor, not Clinton), and I got some guy w/ a stick up his ass instead.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/21/09 1:14am

Best not to talk about the Enterprise theme song, though it got a little less criminal when they removed the vocals. Still...

[Reply](#)

- [top scallop](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/21/09 9:09pm

I liked the setup of Enterprise, in particular the testy relationship between the Vulcans and humans. Sadly the show sucked. But the idea was good at least...

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/24/09 1:49am

I thought DS9 was the best of all the serieses, precisely BECAUSE it had a group of people with mixed motives and differing agendas who often didn't get along (especially in the first few years) - but could work together anyway. The Bajoran religion, and Sisko's initially-reluctant role as the "Emissary of the Prophets", also added a depth most ST series lacked - a feeling of deeply-rooted Faith that commented on the problems and promise of our own religions without being heavy-handed about it. Quark and his family were (for once) well-written and well-thought-out Ferengis - a people that cherishes financial rewards to the exclusion of all else, and what would that mean they would (and more

importantly, wouldn't) do in a given situation, and how would they see the Universe - and how would steady contact with the rest of the Universe and their differing moral codes change them...?

And once the Federation encountered The Founders, and Odo discovered he was a Founder himself, the show kicked into high gear for its last three years - full of betrayals, almost-betrayals, acts of expiation, battles, hot sex, characters holding true to principles or letting them slip for expediency's sake, and HIGHLY unlikely heroes. (Who ever thought Kira would owe Quark, of ALL sentient beings, for saving her life? Not Quark, THAT's for sure! )

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#)Fighter Hayabusa

3/24/09 4:43am

Janeway was the closest in style to Kirk of any of the Captains, and I would take her in a fight over Picard, although Kirk would take them both down without breaking a sweat.

And while Voyager had its problems, I also think it came the closest in feel to TOS of all the spin-offs. If Enterprise had shown a little more wit (which I had hoped from Bakula, given Quantum Leap), and respect for its origins, it could have been something special. Shame they just never got the feel right.

Next Gen was fine, but I will remind everyone that it spawned the Ewok of Star Trek, Wesley Crusher.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:22am

And just a note here . . .

. . . a human expedition to Saturn would return about as much science as an unmanned probe would, for at least twenty times the expense and forty times the danger. When Spock announced the son's accomplishment, I thought "So he's going to take a joyride to Saturn. And no one else in history can do this?"

Also, you have to love the coincidence that the Enterprise just happened to pick up the father of a major historical figure. I know this is the inevitable side effect of time travel episodes — even Quantum Leap had to throw in Marilyn Monroe after awhile — but it might have been more interesting if Christopher's posterity didn't have a major impact on the future, and Kirk had to wrestle with the ethical dilemma of kidnapping.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 10:33am

You have to be careful with that "ethical dilemma of kidnapping" kind of reasoning Mr Denby or you will end up with episodes like TNG's "Up The Long Ladder", one of the most tedious 45 minutes of television ever broadcast. Having said that, I think the script deserves some small amount of credit for having it be his son who's the achiever rather than Christopher himself.

Zack is right about one thing - the "returning him to his aircraft so he doesn't remember anything" doesn't make a damned bit of sense. I mean, it's probably less annoying than either a sea of technobabble to drown the dramatic tension in or McCoy coming along with some kind of amazing and convenient memory-suppressing hypospray, but surely there must have been some other way of resolving the dilemma? It does feel terrifically contrived.

As for Court Martial - it could have been any episode from just about any series from Gunsmoke to Boston Legal. Otherwise-honourable man needs to defend himself against apparently doing a bad thing is one of the oldest cliches there is. Was Kirk really responsible, or will Spock be unexpectedly promoted to captain next week? I can't believe that generated any tension at all, not even on a first broadcast.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 10:42am



Well, small amount of credit. It's a slightly-surprising twist, but the crew missing that detail about his son makes as much sense as Christopher returning unharmed to his plane. Unless Spock's research was hindered by someone vandalizing Wikipedia.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 10:51am

Well they had just travelled 300 years into the past, perhaps Spock couldn't get decent wifi in 1967? But yes, it's not super-impressive that they managed to miss such an obvious piece of information for the sake of a slightly lame plot twist, but in this episode you have to take what you can get. See also: Time Travel, somewhat contrived explanation of, never to be mentioned in any other branch of the franchise, even when time travel is involved and it would be really handy.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 10:54am

OK, so aside from the fact that Christopher somehow has no memory of the accident, how could they have transported him out of the plane before it began to break up, if the first incarnation of the Enterprise didn't beam him out of the jet until after the break up had begun?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 11:00am

Elusive Robert Denby, I believe the trope they were using was that their records were incomplete because of a nuclear war that occurred in the intervening centuries.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 11:19am

Freakin' nuclear war. Ruins everything.

Still, a society that can wiggle around the speed of light can't discover data recovery? I don't think consistency is too much to demand out of 1960s sci-fi television shows done on the fly.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 11:23am

They were too busy airbrushing Spock's ears on the promotional photos to worry about continuity.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 11:37am

Continuity: A Definition - What fanboys/writers/producers think should have happened after the event, or think that's how things should be explained, and are subsequently written into scripts to accomodate otherwise glaring errors.

Man, you think Star Trek over it's five branches has problems with continuity, try Doctor Who ranging from 1963 until now. That's a MAN'S continuity issues debate!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 11:43am

Don't get me started on the glaring continuity issues between "Spearhead From Space" and "Terror of the Autons," please. They couldn't even keep things straight between individual Pertwee series, much less manage it from Doctor to Doctor . . . ;)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:12pm

Reverse the polarity!  
Dampening fields!  
Neutrinos!

Ahh, problems solved.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:15pm

@ Screaming Yellow:

Yes, and that's before you try and explain away Jon Petwee's tattoo in Spearhead... prison branding my arse! Oh, and shall we discuss the history of Mars?

@Joseph:

The Voyage Home is, in fact, the same branch as TOS, it's just a movie not the TV show :) But which TNG ep has mentioend the slingshot? If i have somehow allowed my Star Trek geek quotient to fall below average, i can but apologise

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:22pm

Hey after 5 incarnations over 28 seasons you're allowed some slack. (Unless you're a TrekkER, then there's never an excuse!)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:26pm

@Prole Hole:

Or why Venusians sing lullabies? ;)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:37pm

Especially ones which sound suspiciously like God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen? Still perhaps we should be more open-minded - why SHOULDN'T Venusians sing lullabies?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:43pm

You want continuity in Trek? Between the various incarnations of Trek?!?! They couldn't even keep continuity within a single series!

In TNG alone, they started with the Klingons as members of the Federation and the Borg as a leaderless collective that had babies!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 12:59pm

This is true. Venusians have at least as much need for lullabies as they do for Karate!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:01pm

Now you see, Master, the picky fanboy in me wants to correct you and say we dont KNOW that the Borg had babies, we just saw babies which had been assimilated in incubator-like chambers - they COULD have just been on a ship which was assimilated and then maintained until they reached maturity. And when Naomi (another Voyager mis-step, I'll admit) asks Seven (another Voyager slice of awesomeness) if the Borg have kids, she replies no - those two things aren't explicitly contradictory, though you shouldn't really have to work that hard to get round such problems.

However, if i listen to the normal human being in me I agree with you :)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:19pm

Nah, I'm gonna defend all things Borg. Invention of a Queen was an obvious need for dramatic interaction, but the TNGers didn't specifically \*know\* they were leaderless. And I have no problem with retconning the Borg babies as kidnap victims. The younger you are the more easily assimilated, so it makes sense.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:20pm

Plus the Borg were always described as having a "hive mind" and all hives have a queen.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:29pm

So, the Borg assimilate babies and use power and resources to incubate these infants for years until they can actually perform a function?? Why not just assimilate adults that can, you know, actually perform the function?

The answer is that in the first four seasons of TNG, the Borg were originally conceived as not even assimilating other species, only technology...and they were their own race that procreated. Picard was the first assimilation, until they retconned that later on. Then even later came the Queen and the assimilation nanites, and by the time Enterprise and Voyager rolled around, being Borg was like a nanite-induced mecha disease. How did Picard manage to get the nanites out of his system? Why didn't he retain some Borgness like 7 of 9? How does Hugh fit into all this? Why does my head hurt thinking about it?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:50pm

Well, I can't counter all that, lord knows - my brain hurts just reading your post :-). What I'm saying about the babies is that they assimilated them AND the adults. Plus there's something about their growth rate being accelerated.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:52pm

Plus 7of9 was taken as a child before her body had finished developing, so she depended on some Borg tech to live. And Picard took a while to come back to normal after being rescued.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 1:59pm

First Contact established that Picard had kept some borg-ness after being deborgafied. He could hear them running around the Enterprise after they blew up the Borg cube.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 2:23pm

I understand the dramatic need to create the Queen as a villain, and it worked, but if you're wondering about Borg continuity there isn't any.

In "Best of Both Worlds", the Borg themselves mock the humans' hierarchical leadership system, and create Locutus to communicate with humans because they lacked exactly what they believed the humans needed to tell them not to resist: a leader figure. If they had had a Queen at that point, there would be no need for Locutus as a mouthpiece.

Plus, the Queen kinda ruined the Borg. She was good for the film, but really she took away what was most unique about the Borg...they were a faceless, collective force without emotion, compassion, or individuality. It became all about the Queen and her fascination with Seven of Nine, and who gives a fuck about that?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 2:41pm

Yeah, I'll give you all that. Plus the fact that originally they were only interested in assimilating technology not bodies. I guess it was the awesomeness of the actor(s) who played the Queen that overrode any dopiness of the plot for me. And the whole Unimatrix Zero stuff was a big disappointment.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 3:10pm

Continuity on Doctor Who? What continuity? According to the show, there are three different reasons why Atlantis was destroyed, and two of them come within a year of each other and are by the same damned writer(s).

I mean, they killed off the Daleks at the end of their first story. They honestly just didn't think any of that stuff would ever be preserved in a manner where someone — forty years later — would be spending half their damned time trying to come up with a reason why the Cybermen change appearance every time they're around.

At least they kept all the Star Treks. I'd give someone else's right arm to see "The Web of Fear" intact.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/20/09 6:55pm

In the Tholian Web, they managed time travel by imploding the anti-matter in the engines.

I don't know how the USS Relativity managed it.

[Reply](#)

- [musenloki](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

12/02/14 8:13pm

And TOS started out not with Starfleet (which, like the meaning of the abbreviation of "U.S.S.", was barely conceived until an episode or two before "Court Martial"), but with the idea that the Enterprise was a ship representing only Earth, and furthermore, that Earthlings had conquered the "Vulcanians" (as indicated in some lines between McCoy and Spock in "The Conscience of the King").

But TOS can be forgiven for it's continuity hiccups - it was the first, it was just finding its way. Also, these things somehow makes the series more loveable. In other series, they're worth anywhere from a giggle to a grimace.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:51am

Khaaaaaannnnnn!

Zach, am I right to assume that the fact that you're reviewing "The Return of the Archons" and "A Taste of Armageddon" next mean

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 10:56am

... means that you're saving "Space Seed" for a double feature with "The Wrath of Khan"

Sorry about the split post, I can't start new topics at work, so I tried with the crappy skyfire browser in my mobile device and it cut off. (opera mobile still doesn't show the comments)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 11:28am

Only for people who read all the way to the bottom of his recap.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 11:48am

Gotcha. Sorry, didn't see your second post ere snarking.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 11:52am

If Zach does Wrath of Khan, it'd be awesome to do the other two parts to the whole trilogy within the movies thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 11:53am

Damn, that sounds a little messed up in the end. What I mean is the sort-of trilogy you get with 2, 3, and 4.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 12:39pm

Aside from the Romulan ship, there doesn't seem to be a real thematic or narrative link between III and IV.

Man did IV suck. Transparent aluminum? Really, it HAD to be transparent? And the big climactic convo with the whales? Please, don't let \*us\* in on it. Surely no one's curious as to \*why\* this confab was so damn important.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 1:14pm

Well, it's a Klingon ship, and they did tie up the "Kirk doesn't like being an Admiral" theme, as well as Spock working to embrace his human side after his resurrection in #3.

But, that said, I agree. The thing with the probe was really frustrating. in the novelisation there is a bit more detail provided. Evidently the probe is a hyper-intelligent, all powerful being which likes to converse with intelligent beings across the cosmos (and everyone knows us naughty, polluting humans can't possibly be as smart as those, cute, endangered whales, so of course the probe only wants to talk with the whales, not humans). When the whale's song dies out, the probe immediatly sets off on a 300 year trek to kill us in revenge (even though it's suposedly much more intelligent and enlightened than us lowly humans). When George and Gracie return, they convince the probe to leave earth alone in exchange for continuing their centuries-long conversations. so all in all, it's pretty damn lame. Not as lame as a God illusion hanging out in the center of the universe, but arguably lamer than V'ger

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 1:18pm

Oh yeah? If they're so smart, how come they're dead?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 1:59pm

Thanks, herk. I just remember wishing there were subtitles for that ending.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 2:21pm

@hercules: Yup, we should be getting to "Space Seed" / KAAAAAHHNNN! week after next.

As for the rest of the movies, I'm sort of playing this by ear? Like I mentioned a while back, there's room for extra stuff come the end of the season, before we get into season 2; or else I can do the rest of the original cast flicks as a lead in to the STAR TREK flick this summer.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 2:39pm

I'm glad I'm meeting some other Trek fans that dislike IV. Everyone seems to love IV and hate on III. What the...? Fuck that. Commander Kruge rocks and Kirk has had enough of him. Kruge and Co. pretty much defined what Klingons would be for the rest of all Trek.

Kruga: Take every last man. Form a boarding party armed heavily.

Torg: They outnumber us, my lord.

Kruga: We are Klingons!

IV just was too hammy, and Kirk becomes a total caricature of himself (which he would maintain forevermore). Transparent aluminum? Way to fuck with the timeline, Scotty. How did you gain forty pounds on that Klingon cruiser between films, anyway? Like your gag much?

And what is with that probe, anyway? Let's call it V'Ger II. If V'Ger II is purposefully trying to kill all the humans, that's pretty fucking hypocritical. If not, that is the shittiest communications/scanning device in the universe. "Mr. Data, scan the planet for lifeforms, and hail them, Mr. Worf. What? We destroyed all life on the fucking planet? Damn! Next planet!"

[Reply](#)

- [Lev](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 2:47pm

I think you have to take Part IV in spirit—it's pretty much a goofy comedy that shouldn't be analyzed to death. Since I saw it first when I was 8 I loved it, and still do. If I were to see it for the first time now, things would probably be different.

I loved STV: The Final Frontier as a kid, and I still kind of do. It's a cheesy movie, but it's NOT boring, which is good, and it's so dumb it's almost profound, which is also fun. It actually has a few pretty good action setpieces and Spock's brother is actually well-played.

Provocation: Insurrection is the worst ST movie.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 2:55pm

The pathetic thing was that the aluminum only needed to be transparent for \*our\* benefit (oooh, cool shot!). To spend that much screen time and risk to the characters - to say nothing of timeline fucking - for no good reason was ridiculous. And IV relied way to heavily on jokes, sort of an Ewok syndrome.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 2:58pm

I'd say do them in a row after season one, just seems the most interesting to me. We'll have enough ST hype in the weeks running up to the movie.

[Reply](#)

- [That Cartoon Mouse](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 3:15pm

I think in early versions of the III script (1) the Bird o' Prey IS a Romulan vessel and the villains are Romulans. But then no one would remember the Romulans or they would think they're Vulcans, so they were changed to (2) Klingons, but the Bird o' Prey is hella rad, so there was a scene of the Klingons stealing the Romulan ship. But that was too expensive/tedious/lame, so (3) they just never explained the whole deal of why the Klingons have a ship that has bird markings and looks like futuristic version of the Romulan Bird o' Prey from TOS.

I'm marginally sure of (2) and (3), and not so hot on (1).

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 3:19pm

+1 on the Kruge respect. I know some people didn't like casting a comedic actor for a Klignon commander, but I, for one, thought he was just menacing enough to be a good villain.

When was the last time you say TVH? I bought it recently because I thought my son would like it. I was expecting to hate it but was pleasantly surprised. Sure, the scotty scene where he talks into the mouse and evidently understands the software they use at that particular company well enough to demonstrate the recipe to transparent aluminum is pretty bad. And the whole probe thing doesn't make sense, but if you take it with a grain of salt it's a very enjoyable movie.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 4:04pm

My recollection is that he didn't need the transparent aluminum, he gave them the formula in exchange for the plexiglass, since they didn't have any money. It was going to take years to develop the aluminum (and who knows if the guy didn't invent it already).

I like that movie, but probably wouldn't if I had seen it for the first time as an adult, and V had some great bits including Bones' dying father and Kirk "I need my pain!"

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 5:17pm

I vote for continuing on to season 2 TOS, Zack.

I was already an adult when IV came out so, yeah, I was a bit more critical and did more eye rolling than some, esp after the seriousness of II and III.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 8:09pm

Count me in on the IV haters...

On the other hand, I just picked up V for a euro at the flea market, and watched it after hating it terribly, and it's true it's insanely bad, but also profound:

Paraphrasing:

'You would kill me, a man you do not know, for field of empty holes?'

'It is all I have!'

Is just brilliant... Spock shooting God in the eye in a stolen Klingon ship (not to mention Kirk's God Test), not so much...

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive Deleted](#)hercules rockefeller

3/20/09 8:40pm

I don't hate IV - the poster above is right that "Insurrection" is the worst - but it isn't my favorite of the movies. Why does the Probe look like a Yodel with a soccer ball attached to it?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/21/09 1:20am

Insurrection is definitely the worst, with Generations and V battling it out for second. II, III and First Contact are the hallmarks for me (plus the new one, which will be awesome!, Rod willing).

[Reply](#)

- [Deus Ex Macaroni](#)hercules rockefeller

3/21/09 1:59am

Agreed-Generations is the only one I actually hate. The Enterprise-E gets blown out of the sky (again) by an army surplus Warbird? Data paralyzed with fear? The Hell?? Just bad writing all around.

As far as the whale one is concerned, Nimoy directed and wrote that one; two of his personal causes are whales and nuclear power. Bingo, there's the movie. Doesn't make a whole lot of sense logically-what happens when George and Gracie-and their presumed children- eventually die out again? Do they go back and get more whales? Hook their brains to big satellite antenna? Even so, I do like this one though. Where else can you hear Kirk and Spock curse?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)hercules rockefeller

3/21/09 11:05am

Oh horrors, uber-geek must correct his previous post. I meant \*Nemesis\* is definitely the worst, not Insurrection, which was lame but not barf-worthy. That is all.

[Reply](#)

- [That Cartoon Mouse](#)hercules rockefeller

3/22/09 1:46am

@Master Blaster: I'm not so sure about V'Ger II being a shitty probe. It just doesn't care about humanity; it's looking for whales. The Navy uses sonar that kills all sorts of marine life (or causes them to kill themselves, get lost, myriad bad



things). Sonar works perfectly well; it's just that it isn't particularly concerned with things that aren't enemy submarines. I like the idea of humans being like bacteria to V'Ger II.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:36am

What was missing in "Court Martial"

That episode needed a bar room brawl to make things interesting. They had two chances to do it, and they couldn't pull it off. It's a Western in space, for crying out loud, you can't have a Western without a good tavern fight.

Speaking of which, the fight with Kirk and the three military guys in "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" was one of the funniest things I've ever seen in Star Trek. When Kirk grabbed the top of the doorjamb to lift himself up and that guy went flying under him I started laughing out loud, and it got even worse when Kirk launched himself into those two guys.

And don't keep us in suspense on your jury duty case, Zack. Did you convince the rest of the jurors that the defendant was innocent based on some obscure piece of pop culture that only you knew? Did you get to sleep with one of the women on the jury, thereby jeopardizing the integrity of the judicial process? Or were you under 24-hour police protection because the defendant was a mob boss who threatened to kill everyone on the jury if he was convicted?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holescotteb](#)

3/20/09 10:43am

Ohh or even better, did Jack Bauer burst in and demand a verdict because he just doesn't have time, dammit!

(copy that!)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)scotteb

3/20/09 12:25pm

Off topic but this has always bothered me: Did I miss an ep where Barney quits drinking? Seems like one season he was just suddenly sober.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Casters](#)scotteb

3/20/09 12:47pm

In the Federation fighting manual, two is always better than one.

Why go with a single-handed punch, when a two-fisted is twice as nice? Or why not try a two-footed flying kick? That won't throw you completely off balance.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)scotteb

3/20/09 12:52pm

Maybe you guys are just underestimating Kirk's mad fighting skillz.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)scotteb

3/20/09 1:15pm

@Tinsel: Yeah, a few seasons back, Moe gives Barney free helicopter lessons as a joke, so Barney decides to sober up. Eventually the writers figured out a sober Barney isn't funny, so he falls off the wagon not too long afterwards.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)scotteb

3/20/09 1:23pm

@master

And don't forget the massive effectiveness of the Judo Chop! Need to sneak into the transporter room to get off the enterprise, but Spock's not around to subdue the transporter engineer? No problem, a quick Judo Chop'll do the trick!

[Reply](#)

- [scottebscotteb](#)

3/20/09 1:32pm

Oh, that's another thing I wanted to bring up. Was Spock incapacitating that guy in "Tomorrow Is Yesterday" the first instance of him using the Vulcan Neck Pinch? I don't remember seeing it on any of the previous episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)scotteb

3/20/09 1:38pm

Kirk (and the episode) would have been better off if he were defended by Hyperchicken.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)scotteb

3/20/09 1:55pm

OK, thanks GL, I remember the helicopter ep. Maybe what I'm thinking is that there never was an ep where he falls \*off\* the wagon?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)scotteb

3/20/09 2:22pm

Re: Jury duty, I convinced no one, spent too much time oogling a court clerk, and ultimately ended up handing out a not guilty verdict to someone I still believe was guilty as hell. A very weird, mixed up experience all around. (Oh, and I make a lousy jury foreman, unsurprisingly.)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)scotteb

3/20/09 2:42pm

Oooh, Foreman! Lousy or not, color me impressed!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefellers](#)scotteb

3/20/09 2:55pm

Zack, I hear you there. I was on a jury once where I thought for sure that the defendant was guilty (of child molestation no less) and it ended up a hung jury because several members felt they had reasonable doubts. A couple of them were grade-A morons, but a couple of them were pretty smart and still had some doubts. In the end he pled guilty to endangering a minor and got off with probation, and not having to register as a sex offender. All in all, one of the most difficult things I've ever done, but one of the most worthwhile too. Maybe I get a bit too geeky about this stuff, but I really think it's worth the effort to be involved in the process.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)scotteb

3/20/09 5:12pm

Zack - I'm sure you have a million other things to do, and you probably don't want to relive the experience, but I would love a (short?) blog entry on your jury duty experience. At least the weird and mixed-up parts of it. For some reason I'm kind of fascinated by this "12 Angry Men" kind of stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)scotteb

3/20/09 5:32pm

I got jury duty coming up in a couple of weeks. It's a free day off AND I get to decide the fate of another!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)scotteb

3/20/09 6:57pm

Yeah, the Vulcan Neck Pinch can knock you out, but what you really want to avoid is the Vulcan Nad Pinch.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:46am

Next weeks episodes

The Red Hour is coming!

Man those Puritans and their well-scheduled wild orgies of sex and violence.

And hey look!

Computers are scary and evil.

Fear technology and rise up against it people of 1967.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 12:49pm

Is "Return of the Archons" the first episode where Kirk talks a computer to death? That is just an amazing, amazing skill.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 12:56pm

He can out-talk a super computer ... he can take down 3 military dudes with a single punch ... but he just can't seem to lose that beer gut.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 1:23pm

I love all the eps where Kirk out-logics the computers.

It's an old story, but Shatner would always work out during hiatus and then slack off during filming. So skinny Kirk eps are early in the season and girdle Kirk is towards the end.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 1:38pm

Wait a minute, Gleeth, that's the Shat you're talking about. Kirk didn't have a gut. That was an overabundance of abdominal muscles....like a twelve-pack.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 2:13pm

Girdle Kirk... That is some quality funny!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Nerd Paragon

3/20/09 6:58pm

This was before the invention of paradox absorbing crumple zones.

[Reply](#)

- [anotherspaceboy](#)Nerd Paragon

3/21/09 5:24am

man, i love 'taste of armageddon.' really one of those episodes that best shows off kirk's 'your bible is a lie!' contempt for the prime directive so important to later captains. plus, if i remember correctly, it has my favorite line from scotty : 'the best diplomat i know is a fully loaded phaser bank.'

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:55am

It's spelled Sci-Fi, damnit

The next person who spells it "Syfy" gets kicked in the knees.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/20/09 11:12am

Thanks, I was going to mention that in my post and forgot. Better yet, just take a couple of extra seconds and call it science fiction.

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/20/09 12:45pm

NBC Universal can suck it for destroying my favorite tv station.

Also, 100 Internet Points to the first person that completes my ST6 reference.

[Reply](#)

- [Codename Workerbee](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/20/09 12:58pm

www.syfy.com if you got to you don't even get the sci-fi website; just a bunch of marketing mumbo jumbo

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/20/09 1:15pm

"Not everyone keeps their genitals in the same place"

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/20/09 2:04pm

filthy knee-balled aliens!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Sir Poodlesnort

3/24/09 2:05am

How about just "SF" - period? I never liked "sci-fi", or "syfy" or anything else like that b/c it just sounds patronizing to the genre we all love.

And yeah - I know Harlan Ellison went on at length about it, repeatedly and often rabidly. But that's Harlan - and he's got about a .500 batting average on being dead-on or full of it.... ;)

[Reply](#)

- [Lionel Hutz Esq.](#) Sir Poodlesnort

3/24/09 5:09am

For what's it worth, Asimov always preferred "SF."

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tibber](#) Zack Handlen

3/20/09 6:00pm

the thing that always bugged me about Court Martial...

would Cogley have been allowed to defend Finney at his trial? is there no conflict of interest law in the Federation? or have i just watched too much Law & Order?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpestibber](#)

3/20/09 7:13pm

And why aren't there any Jewish lawyers on Star Trek? Were they banned at some point in the future? I think Irish is TV code for Jewish.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) tibber

3/20/09 7:30pm

"Religion goes out of favor in 2037 when science discovers the gene that regulates fear."

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive Deleted](#) tibber

3/20/09 8:46pm

I thought it was because the Jews all turned into Ferengis in the early 22nd Century.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#) tibber

3/21/09 1:47am

see, that doesn't bother me, and that's also because i have watched too many Law & Order reruns. how many former ADAs turned defense attorneys was it implied that Jack banged?

the thing that gets me about Catspaw is the same thing that bugs me about the soon to be reviewed Return of the Archons. the two times almost total disaster befalls the landing party are the two times Kirk decides to delegate it to someone else. holy plot device.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#) Zack Handlen

3/20/09 10:57am

Trek Trivia

Hey Zack, the "time travel discovery" moment at the end of "Naked Time" was supposed to tie directly into "Tomorrow Is Yesterday," making them into a two-parter but the idea was dropped and the scripts were rewritten to make them standalones.

Also, Elisha Cook, Jr. was ailing at that point and had a lot of trouble remembering his lines—his big speech was actually edited together from multiple takes—so it's no surprise his participation in the episode was as minimal as it was.

And yes, I do realize I know waaaay too much about this stuff, thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/20/09 1:21pm

I think he mentions that in his Naked Time write-up.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/20/09 1:51pm

You're probably right, but my ass was too lazy to go back and check. The rest of em too.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/20/09 1:51pm

The rest of ME, too. Apparently my fingers are the laziest part of me.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/20/09 2:45pm

Always good for a reminder anyway for trivia gluttons who might've missed it.

[Reply](#)

- [Kid Dada](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 12:59pm

Ah, Criswell...

We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives. And remember my friend, future events such as these will affect you in the future.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kid Dada

3/20/09 8:25pm

Beat me to it my friend, ah, but I miss him too!

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Kid Dada

3/21/09 9:25am

You are interested in the unknown... the mysterious. The unexplainable. That is why you are here. And now, for the first time, we are bringing to you, the full story of what happened on that fateful day. We are bringing you all the evidence, based only on the secret testimony, of the miserable souls, who survived this terrifying ordeal.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Kid Dada

3/24/09 2:37am

God Help Us In The Future!

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 1:13pm

Sequence

Does anyone else have the original series not in the newer box sets, but on those two-episode-per-disk series that came

out in '00 - '01? That's how I watched season 1, thinking that was the correct order, but I see now on Wikipedia and these reviews by Zack that it's not even close.

For example, on my DVDs The Court Martial (on DVD Vol 7) comes directly before Menagerie (on DVD Vol 8), which is weird because that puts Kirk's court-martial back-to-back with Spock's. Looks like the airing date is different than production date. How do purists feel about that, which is considered the "right" way to watch the series?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gleeth Yurnix

3/20/09 2:08pm

Hmmm, my take would be to watch each ep in the order they were aired because that would most closely replicate the experience of watching them originally on TV.

The 2-ep discs were arranged for marketing purposes only, is my guess.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 8:42pm

"New-Improved" Versions?

Still wondering where I can find an episode of these new versions, and which one you'd recommend as either:

A : The most improved

B: The best example of why it was misguided to do this.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

3/21/09 6:35am

Someone seems to imply in the comments that the coloured plastic box sets are the new improved ones.... Is this true?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 7:27pm

Criswell

Nice Criswell quote, my friend!

God, I miss that guy...

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Richelieu Jr

3/21/09 9:24am

We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives. And remember my friend, future events such as these will affect you in the future.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 8:07pm

McCoy's Greatest Observation Re: Kirk

Say what you want about "Court Martial," but it has the greatest thing McCoy ever said about Kirk.

He was talking to Lt. Shaw, the prosecuting attorney:

"All of my old friends look like doctors, all of his old friends look like you."

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)barefoot jim

3/23/09 2:35pm

Doctors being all men, of course.

[Reply](#)

- [ChrisHunt](#)Zack Handlen

5/16/12 8:50am

There's a bit in "Tomorrow is Yesterday" where Spock says something like "as the Enterprise flies towards the Sun, logically, we'll travel back in time."

I wonder if Spock can sell \*any\* kind of BS he pleases simply by slinging a "logically" in there somewhere? Maybe it's like the mind meld or other freaky Vulcan stuff. It must come in really useful at annual staff appraisal time: "I've spent most of the year dicking around with my hippy vulcan harp thing, so \*logically\* you must give me a massive raise..."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 7:34pm

Amorous prosecutors

By a strange coincidence, I'm going through all the episodes of Next Generation and only yesterday saw the one where they want to disassemble Data and he has to have a trial to see if he's Starfleet property.... The prosecutor/Lcal Authority- An ex of Picard's... Strange...

(Cracking good episode though, and the first really, really good one I've seen (season 2) so far)

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

3/20/09 2:16pm

McFly!

This comment is intended solely as appreciation of the Back to the Future reference. Thank you for including it in your article.

[Reply](#)



## ***Star Trek: "The Return Of The Archons" / "A Taste Of Armageddon"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 27, 2009

[Comments \(128\)](#)



It's a curious fact that science fiction movies and TV shows often spend as much time decrying technology as they spend creating it. Computers will become coldly logical sociopaths who need to be taught the value of lurve and other squishy feeling-type things; robots will turn on their masters; and electronically controlled homes will develop conscious initiative and attempt to impregnate a human woman so they can spread their evil to the world at large. (Seriously. Like fucking clockwork.) I think it's got something to do with our obsession for putting the heart over the head at all costs, a philosophical imperative that's as screwed up morally as it is physically impossible. But whatever the reason, it can create a certain cognitive dissonance—here's this fancy shiny gadget! But don't like it, because, y'know, it's all messed up inside and stuff.

This week I'm cheating on the schedule; in order to set up for the long promised "Space Seed"/*Wrath of Khan* double feature (for those keeping score, I believe this is the first time I've managed to spell "Khan" correctly in this blog), we had to jump an ep. So for our recapping pleasure, we've got "The Return Of The Archons" and "A Taste Of Armageddon." As we've established, continuity isn't exactly an issue here, and pairing these two actually works out nicely, since both deal with people using emotionless machines to try and create a utopia free of human failings. Shockingly, it doesn't go so well. But hey, that's what Kirk and his two fists are for!

The first half of "Archons" is a deep bizarre trip, similar in tone to one of those socially concious cheapies Roger Corman put out in the sixties. It starts with Sulu and a crewman, O'Neil, running down a town street in colonial garb. They're being chased by some dudes dressed like monks; O'Neil makes a break for it, while Sulu manages to get beamed back to the Enterprise just after getting a face full of sparklers from one of the monk's magic sticks. If that wasn't freaky enough, on ship Sulu is seriously blissing out, accusing Kirk and anyone who comes near him of being "not of the Body." It's the sort of opening that stands right between intriguing and bafflingly absurd, and that's a balance the episode will hold to for quite some time.

In order to find O'Neil, Kirk beams down to the planet (Beta III) with a landing party made up of Spock, McCoy, and the usual assortment of red shirts. They're on their guard, for understandable reasons; in addition to O'Neil's

disappearance and Sulu's mindmelt, the Enterprise records list that a ship called the Archon disappeared around Beta III some years ago. (Roughly the same thing happens in "Armageddon," which begs the question, is Starfleet really that cavalier over missing starships? You'd think they would've sent *somebody* to check up.) Planet-side, everything seems okay—the group fits right in with their *Wild Wild West* style outfits, enough that they can start up a conversation with a disturbingly over-enunciated man on the street. "It's almost the Red Hour," he tells them, as if that should mean something; it doesn't, but whatever it is, it definitely doesn't sound good. A nice lady named Tula sends Kirk and the others to her father's house for lodging. Just in time, too, as the town hall clock strikes six, and everybody on the street but the Enterprise guys freaks right the fuck out.

Throughout, "Archon" has a loose, unpolished feeling, which means that it starts off interesting but loses steam as various subplots fail to add together properly. Which isn't to say that the episode doesn't make enough sense by the end; more that you walk away feeling vaguely unsatisfied, like leaving home and knowing you've forgotten something but being unable to remember exactly what. Still, as first acts go (and by first act here I mean the introduction of the problem), this is nifty. It doesn't really *feel* like a *Star Trek* episode, not at first, and that makes for an interesting change of pace.

Kirk and the rest head to Tula's father's place while the people outside proceed to riot, scream, and embrace laciviously. (PDAs are just so gauche, y'know?) The father, named Reger, is having a chat with a couple of older gentlemen when Kirk busts in, and there's some suspicion as to where our heroes came from. They pawn themselves off as outsiders, which works for a while, but begs the question what the rest of the planet looks like.

One of the biggest justifiable criticisms you can throw at *Trek* of any era is that it rarely takes into account that civilized planets usually have more than one civilization on them. (Since all we have is Earth to go by here, I guess you can replace "usually" with "always.") The presumption in this series is that if you see one city, you've seen every other city, and town, and village; and if the one city you see has some sort of metaphorical struggle going on, every city does. It's possible that Landru (the computerized dead guy who ends up as the ep's villain) isn't in control of the whole world, but why wouldn't the Enterprise have tried contacting them? Why would they manage to find the one place where Landru's efforts stem from?

Of course, this is sort of an accepted quirk of a lot of sci-fi; I only mention it here because the people of the town are confused at the idea of outsiders but not so confused that they don't believe it's possible. There's a lot of talk about a "festival," which ties in with the public mayhem, and Reger and friends operate off a basic assumption that anybody who's everybody knows what the Festival is and what it means. We never really get much of an explanation; the exposition that's delivered in the second half is generic enough that it could cover a wide variety of scenarios. There's never a logical reason provided for the twelve hour freak-out. You can come up with a reason (most likely it's a chance for everybody in town to vent their baser impulses; the brain-washing we see probably tamps down those impulses but is unable to completely extinguish them. What's weird is that not everybody is brainwashed—were there people on the street who hadn't had their mind's adjusted?), but the whole thing lacks the force of the series' best storylines. That's why questions as to the nature of the planet's population get raised, whereas in something like "Armageddon," it's easier to let those questions slide. (Mainly because there's a whole book's worth of other questions that need answering.)

One of Reger's friends rats out Kirk and the team, so the Lawgivers show up the next morning (tragically, Pearl Forrester is not among them) with their hollow, sparking tubes. The resulting confrontation proves that the monks aren't exactly used to getting questioned, which sets the wheels in Kirk and Spock's respective heads a'turning. After the monks leave, Reger takes the group to his secret, castle-playset hideaway; he's working with the resistance, so he's willing to help Kirk, even if he doesn't really know why. Before they arrive at the hideaway, though, our heroes have to face off against the entire mind control town. It's a creepy sequence, as everyone stops what they're doing and slowly picks up the closest thing they can use as a weapon; only, Kirk and crew are armed with phasers, so it's not really much of a fight.

Really, the only time the threat seems serious here is after everybody gets captured and McCoy is taken away for, ahem, "perspective alteration." Mind-muckery always freaked me out as a kid—something about losing control over yourself in the worst possible way—and seeing the impulsive, reactionary McCoy reduced to three lines and a smile is

unsettling, to say the least. The Enterprise gets attacked with heat rays, just to give us a reason as to why Kirk and the others aren't immediately beamed out once they find O'Neil, but the danger seems more an obligation than anything to get worried about. Kirk is taken away by the guards, and there's a brief indication that he's just as dotty as McCoy; but it's all a con, because one of Reger's resistance buddies was actually running the machine when Kirk arrived.

To skip to the end—we keep hearing about Landru, and the guy even pops up as a projection a couple of times to give some goofy ass speech about goodness, but he's actually dead and it's his *computer* that's screwing everything up. Landru programmed the computer to run things, and it's been doing so in all the wrong ways; but that's why we have Kirk, who's got a knack for busting logic circuits with the power of his mind. (I guess this is why he's always able to beat Spock at chess?) In a scene that goes on for far too long, Kirk basically talks Landru's machine into suiciding. It's something he does a lot, we'll see—deciding that a society isn't working the way it should, and doing his level best to wreck the place.

Lord only knows what the repercussions will be for Beta III now that Landru is gone. One of Kirk's men stays behind to help the process along, which seems to be the standard Starfleet response after freeing a planet from its dark overlords. (Actually, the standard Starfleet response is the Prime Directive of non-interference that Spock mentions to Kirk; but since Kirk says, basically, "Nuts to that," I don't think it's a directive that gets enforced very often.) Given that it took the Enterprise however long to show up after the Archon went missing, I'm not sure I'd want to be the man left behind; I have pretty good idea if something happened to me, nobody would ever know.

"Armageddon" shares some of the same set-up as "Archons," as well as the same resolution; once again we have the Enterprise visiting a strange planet where a starship (this time the U.S.S. Valiant) disappeared fifty years ago, and once again Kirk has to bust up some plywood and flashing lights to save the day. (Although this time he uses phasers and not quips.) More importantly, once again we have a society that's using tech-based shortcuts to circumvent complex moral problems. In "Archons," the problem was something as nebulous and ill-defined as the battle between good and evil, but in "Armageddon," the trouble is more concrete—war, and the various things that it is not good for.

Oh, and there's something else here familiar as well—the return of the asshole bureaucrat, in the form of Ambassador Robert Fox, aboard the Enterprise to help establish a diplomatic relationship with the citizens of Eminiar VII. When the Enterprise goes into orbit around Eminiar, the planet issues a Code 710, which warns away any attempts to beam down to the surface. Which is odd, because the whole ep rests on the fact that, much like Beta III, nobody in Starfleet has had any contact with the citizens on Eminiar. How would they know the code? I guess the crew of the Valiant could've told them before they got killed, but why nobody came asking question after the Valiant vanished is beyond me; no one on the Enterprise even seems all that concerned that the ship disappeared.

Despite the warning, Fox demands that they still visit the planet. (As an ambassador, he's not really got a handle on the concept of "diplomacy"; although that may be more true to real life than I'd care to admit.) Kirk has no choice but to agree; his only caveat is that Fox stay behind on the ship while he, Spock, Yeoman Tamula, and a couple of red-shirts make the trip. Again we see Kirk's complete inability to observe a situation without getting directly involved in it. But since beaming down to Eminiar means getting away from the funwrecking Mr. Fox, he probably made the right call.

Upon arrival, the landing party is greeted by a hottie who calls herself "Mea 3." ("I congratulate you on your instrumentation," if you know what I mean, and I think you do.) While Kirk does his usual subtle "Hello nurse" routine, and we marvel at the assinine costumes of Mea's associates—were those hats ever considered a good idea?—Mea takes the team to meet with Anan 7, head of the city (and, presumably, the planet) government council. Anan criticizes Kirk for ignoring the Code 710, and informs our increasingly astonished heroes that they are currently at war with the neighboring planet, Vendikar, with year casualties running into the millions. Even while they're talking, the nefarious enemy launches an attack at the very heart of Eminiar, landing fusion bombs in the city in which Kirk and company stand. But that doesn't make any sense, because nobody in the crew heard any explosions or sees any destruction.

Here's where we get our hook: sure, the Eminiar/Vendikar war is ongoing, but it's being fought by computers. Attacks are launched in concept, casualties established through statistical adjustment, and anyone who's been labeled as "dead"

is required to show up at a disintegrator chamber within 24 hours to report for, you guessed it, disintegration.

It's one of *Trek's* classic allegorically powerful, common sense implausible scenarios. The alien races (who, like the people of Beta III, are basically human; Kirk says they share a common heritage, whatever that means) have figured out the perfect way to keep a conflict perpetually unresolved, while preventing their respective cultures from crumbling in the face of endless destruction and chaos. Just the idea of "reporting to be killed" is chilling enough to make practical considerations secondary—it's a strong observation on the idiocy of war that people could go to such ends without actually trying to reach some sort of agreement.

Still, one has to wonder, why *haven't* they tried to reach an agreement? Anan does an awful lot of talking about the horrors of war, and in the course of the episode we find out that he lost his wife in the last "attack." So what's stopping him from giving Vendikar a ring up, just to see how things stand? The biggest problem with "Armageddon" is that the timeline is stretched to absurdity. The war that Kirk and Spock discover has been going on for *five hundred years*. Most of those years, the two planets have been engaged in their murderous version of *Battleship*, and the idea that in all that time, nobody's bothered to question what's going on, or taken steps to make it stop, is absurd. Of course we don't know the Eminiar's entire history, so there's no way to be sure that people haven't objected from time to time (I'd like to imagine that the rest of the planet doesn't bother with all the foolishness, and Anan's city is just where all the rules lawyers and talk radio hosts are sent); but the thing is, this is an Emperor's-New-Clothes kind of idea. It only works if everyone believes in it absolutely. Once anybody starts raising doubts, the whole thing crumbles.

Whether or not Kirk and his team's questions would've had such an effect in the long term is rendered moot after Anan tells Kirk that the Enterprise was "destroyed"; the aboard ship personnel are required to beam down and take their medicine like good walking dead, and to facilitate this, Anan holds Kirk et al hostage. Which is pretty much the end of everything, if only he knew it. I doubt Kirk would've let the Eminiar/Vendikar relationship continue regardless, but once his ship and his men are in danger, all bets are off. Our heroes find a way to break out of their captivity (apparently, Spock's "mind meld" abilities aren't his only telepathic gifts; funny that they'd give the most clinical member of the cast the most nebulous and ill-defined of powers), and the rest of the episode is largely a matter of them bopping from place to place, blowing up disintegration chambers, and getting in philosophical debates with Mea and Anan.

We do get some much deserved commueppance for the absurdly rigid Fox. Anan tries to trick the Enterprise into beaming down its crew by faking Kirk's voice through a communicator, but Scott and McCoy ain't buying; when the fake voice doesn't work, Anan has the ship bombarded from the planet's surface. This makes standing captain Scotty a wee bit paranoid, but Fox isn't having it. As soon as contact is re-established with Anan, he agrees to beam down himself, despite McCoy and Scott's misgivings. And wouldn't you know it, minutes after beaming down, Fox finds himself and his assistant being marched to a disintegrator. Irony! Or something.

Luckily, Mr. Spock arrives just in time to save the day. Kirk gets re-captured by Anan, but manages to give Scotty "General Order 24" when Anan gives the Enterprise a ring to tell them their captain is a captive. Kirk promised earlier that he could destroy the planet if he wanted to, and it looks like he's ready to make good on his promise; in one of the more bad-ass lines he's gotten this season, he tells Anan, "I didn't start it, Councilman... but I'm liable to finish it." It's been a while since I last watched this, and I kept waiting to find out that the whole "Order 24" thing was a bluff, but the reveal never came. Which means that maybe Starfleet is more concerned about their starships that I'd thought; they don't do aggressive searches when one goes missing, but at least they give the ships Death Star powers.

As mentioned, it all winds up with Kirk destroying the machines that let the Eminiar and Vendikars fight without fighting; Kirk then gives a speech about human nature and violence that sits on the right side of the line between compelling and preachy, but just barely. (I really liked the "We can admit we're killers, but that we won't kill today" argument. It sounds like the sort of thing you'd hear at an AA meeting.) Fox, having learned his lesson about never, ever disagreeing with Kirk, decides to stay behind and help Anan establish peaceful relations with Vendikar; given what we've seen of Fox's tact so far, I wouldn't be surprised if things get worse before they get better, but hey, we never come back here again, so not our problem.

I don't think "Archons" or "Armageddon" are classics; "Armageddon" comes closest, but the premise just has a few too

many holes to sustain its attempts at profundity. "Archons" is too slipshod, really—it starts strong, and peaks about the point where the townspeople attack en masse. Too bad there were a good twenty minutes to go after that. But one thing both eps have that's worth praising is ambition; where something like "Court Martial" was content to tell a familiar story, both of this week's entries were going for something new, and I respect that. I'd rather have ambitious failures than a middling success, any day of the week.

#### Grades:

"The Return Of The Archons": B

"A Taste Of Armageddon": B+

#### Stray Observations:

- All the "of the Body" talk in "Archons" made me think of Clive Barker's short story, "In The Hills, The Cities." How cool would that have been? (Okay, given the special effects limitations of the time, not cool at all, but the episode in my mind is unbelievably cool.)
- Too bad the Landru-bot didn't have "paradox-absorbing crumple zones," eh?
- Spock also gets a good line in "Armageddon": "Practicing a peculiar variety of diplomacy, sir." (More Spock: "Sir, there's a multilegged creature crawling on your shoulder.")
- When Scotty's idioms go Too Far: "The haggis is in the fire for sure."
- Coming next week: *Khan* Fever. Catch it!

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (127)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:28am

A Taste of Armageddon

. . . was one of the first episodes I saw as a kid, and I remember thinking how scary it was that they would just march off to suicide themselves like that

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 11:51am

Implausible or not, I would've given the episode a lot more credit if it had done more with the disintegration chambers. It really is a terrifically creepy concept; why not spend some time with the people who are willingly climbing into them?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 11:56am

That would have been a great addition to the script; it makes me wonder if TNG might have gone that "sociological S-F" route where TOS didn't, and spent some time with the "casualties."

Of course, given that TOS was more an action-oriented show with good ideas and TNG was an ideas show with (occasionally) decent action, it's sort of an apples/oranges comparison I guess.

[Reply](#)

- [Rex](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 11:56am

Hark! A relevant firstie!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:11pm

Sure, Dormouse. Just offer them a tax cut.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:36pm

I think a population that was raised with such a longstanding "tradition" of willing suicide wouldn't need convincing since it's such an established part of their society. Kinda like turning 30 in Logan's Run and Renewing.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:40pm

Yes, but LR offer a carrot \_and\_ a stick. In "Armageddon," all we get is "you come in and get killed." There's no physical reason why this needs to keep happening—there's no market pressure that we no of, no considerations of over-population, and there's certainly no religious or spiritual element presented. The premise here is under-developed; it's got a great set-up, but there's no sense that the writer thought it through past the set-up to the mechanics of the thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:41pm

Return of the Archons isn't a dreadful episode, although it and its plot will be continually recycled until the end of Season Three with increasing diminishing returns (The Apple?). Didn't like the plot? Get used it, you're going to be seeing a lot more of it... Completely agree that Armageddon is better than Archons, but honestly they are both pretty forgettable...

Still KKKKKKAAAAHHHHNNN next week - nothing could be bad about that, can't wait for it!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:43pm

Yep. If you grow up with it, it becomes an ingrained part of your life pretty quickly, to the point where you don't think twice about it.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:46pm

It's true, I think that the writers figured that presenting a 500 year war would presume a lot of cultural imperatives without spelling any of them out.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:52pm

I think that's just lazy writing, honestly; I'm willing to cut some slack, but when so much time is spent on Anan trying to philosophically justify his culture's actions, it would've been nice if it had boiled down to something more compelling than, "If we don't do this, we're evil!"

As well, just because a tradition is 500 years old doesn't mean it won't die out. There is \_no\_ external threat from the Vendikars, and the Eminiari civilization is an advanced one; the idea that nobody would've thought to give the other guy a call in half a millennium is a stretch.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:53pm

Zack, I think the big reason the ToS plots were underdeveloped the way they are is that they were working a 5-6 day shooting schedule (later truncated to 4-5 in Season 3), and just churning out episodes as quickly as they could, so there just wasn't time to fine tune things. Also, I'm sure they were not figuring on guys like us analyzing them 40 years later.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:55pm

It has the hostage angle. Either you go or your family dies. After 500 years you'd certainly have some mythology built up around it, but I think you could make it work for a while.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 12:59pm

Like most good Star Trek ideas, it's an exaggeration. You probably couldn't get people to march into disintegration chambers for five hundred years. However, you can maintain a war longer if you insulate your populace from the reality of war. And you can get people to kill themselves in large numbers if you frame the question properly. Imagine a war which killed 40,000 American civilians every year. There would be a very powerful incentive to end this war. But if they're being killed in automobiles, we will hardly lift a finger.

"Darmok" is the pinnacle of this kind of show (to skip 20 years ahead). You couldn't actually have a civilization that spoke entirely in allusions, but it gets at some of the real truths about how we use language, and it's a compelling story.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 1:03pm

Bingo. Also, it's worth noting that the casualty figures in "Armageddon" were meant to comment on the Vietnam war casualty figures that were showing up on the nightly news at around the same time, and that the episode itself was meant as a comment on the cold-bloodedness of modern warfare, sort of an "If we don't watch what we're doing, THIS is what we could turn into" cautionary tale.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 1:08pm

Alurin FTW - nicely explained dude!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 1:22pm

A friend just suggested it's also an allegory for the Cold War, which makes even more sense to me than Vietnam—the idea of an endless conflict where nobody really knows what the goals are, or where the lines are drawn.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 1:32pm

Good point.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 2:11pm

Yeah, I like that too.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 2:18pm

I agree with the Cold War idea, Vietnam being the actual dying that continued inevitably because the two sides were afraid to use their full resources.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 2:43pm

Yes, Armageddon is clearly commenting on the Cold War mentality in which strategists held rational discussions about killing people in previously unimaginable numbers, as well as the Vietnam casualty figures (which as wookiee points out is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Cold War). It's a pretty good allegory, all things considered, despite the hats.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 4:36pm

Sarducci: That explains the pressure on the governments, but what gets the citizenry to go along? "So you're saying that if millions of people don't commit suicide, millions of people might die?"

Steph5555: i think the latter. Most of these "civilizations" aren't exactly held up as models for us. They just don't want to deal with the complexity of a whole world. Each episode is just a single idea, and they want to play with that idea, rather than actually presenting new worlds as whole worlds.

[Reply](#)

- [bk](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 9:40pm

"Armageddon" seems to have a lot of the Mutually-Assured-Destruction cold war philosophy ticking around it; the big board and computers that Kirk destroys are certainly like the War Room in Dr. Strangelove.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 10:32pm

Or vice versa. Trek pre-dates Strangelove.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 10:44pm

Oooooo.... I HATE being dis-integrated!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/27/09 10:56pm

Ugh, please for the love of god, no one look at my above post. Could not have been more wrong. Appy-polly-logies to bk.

[Reply](#)

- [anotherspaceboy](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/29/09 5:09am

i say no more than 15 to 20 million. depending on the breaks.

[Reply](#)



- [permazorch](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/29/09 1:15pm

Not a day passes that I don't long for a disintegration booth, but at the end of each of these horrible existences, I have a couple of beers or vodkas, and I no longer desire instant & complete annihilation.

Where's the Romulan Ale?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/30/09 8:02am

@ALURIN et al,

I don't think the threat is limited to the idea of millions of people dying. As I recall they make a strong allusion tot he importance of the destruction of their CIVILIZATION... This is a fair point, and I recall asking my dad about it when I was young and as usual he told me some bullshit that didn't even pass my 10 year-ols logic test: he said it included all the buildings and cars. then again, he did give me a fake answer once that started my career as a film maker, so I gotta give the old goat some props (yay! now I'm poor!).

Destruction of the civilization, culture, everything they know, believe and have done,a s well as fought and dies for for generations...

That shit works;. Just look how the whole 'If we leave Iraq, our soldier will have died for nothing meme worked for so many years. Not 500, I grant you, but we are now fighting a war against a nebulous enemy that has on end date. Our first forever war (unless you count the astoundingly successful War on Drugs). Certain wars exist not to win, but to justify the huge industries that need to make arms, sell coffins, build planes, do 'dual use' research...

If we're not fighting someone, why are we employing millions of people to help us fight?

Not to mention why is it more expensive to fight a few-hundred cave dwellers than to defeat the Nazis and the Soviet Union?

Todays words for the day 'Perma-war' and 'Prevenge'.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

3/30/09 10:32am

Prevenge is a dish best served pre-chilled!

[Reply](#)

- [bob dobbs died for you](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/31/11 3:58am

Ok, I know this post is two years old but I have to point out: Strangelove came out in 1964, Star Trek debuted in '66.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack\_Handlen

1/11/14 6:36pm

I think it's more plausible than you give it credit for... but I do agree w/ you that it would have been interesting to spend more time showing people willingly climbing into them.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

1/11/14 6:38pm

Exactly. It has to be assumed that people had long accepted this as "normal" and perhaps anyone who didn't, was killed anyhow. So people just accept it as their fate. Think about countries over in the Middle East where there is constant fighting. They probably just grow up thinking it's normal. Sad.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack\_Handlen

1/11/14 6:40pm

Yes, there could have been more to the episode. Perhaps if it had been a 2-parter they could have delved into the idea more thoroughly. Still, I think it's a very good episode. And a very interesting concept. It's hard to flesh it out enough within an hour.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack\_Handlen

1/11/14 6:42pm

Well, consider the fact that so many people keep doing the same thing... making the same mistake... over and over and over... and never considering any other option, and is it really that much of a stretch that this could go on as long as it has? Like I said above, think about certain countries where there is always some kind of fighting going on, and you think, "don't they ever get sick of fighting??" It becomes very ingrained though. And maybe the episode was supposed to show that these people are not nearly as advanced as they think they are. Just like humans in fact.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Jason Mucci

7/04/16 11:34pm

I like that you are holding a conversation with 5 year old posts.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:51am

Plausibility Meter

I'm not sure I have as big a problem with the plausibility factor in "Armageddon" as Zack does, though it's been a while since I've seen this episode and the details are a little fuzzy.

In our history we haven't really had a conflict of the length and scope of the war in the show. Maybe over generations, a war starts to sustain itself—as people are born into a system and inculcated into it in childhood, what seems unnatural—undying hostility toward the enmity, meek submission to suicide—could seem more natural.

It's hard to draw a parallel with human history: we just don't have institutions that last that long. Maybe that in itself is what's implausible.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)partdavid

3/27/09 12:35pm

I'll say. We have a common bedroom wall, and the noise is unbelievable.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/27/09 12:41pm

Didn't see your post before adding mine above but that's exactly what I was thinking.

Actually, the brainwashing behind ritualized genital mutilation of male babies for thousands of years is a perfect corollary for this concept on Earth.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santopartdavid](#)

3/27/09 12:50pm

I can't remember where I heard it — probably in my sociology class — but weren't there some Pacific tribes who were basically at war for their entire known history? I agree, it's not implausible.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)partdavid

3/27/09 1:02pm

Yeah, but that was actual war. What we're seeing in "Armageddon" is something else; a mutual agreement based on trust and nothing else. There doesn't seem to be any emotion against the Vendikars, no built-up hostility to keep the conflict going. (Also, war in human history has become less and less civilized over time—stronger weapons, fewer ground rules. Why would this version stagnate so permanently? It's a clever-but-silly conceit.)

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)partdavid

3/27/09 1:03pm

Britain and France fought each other regularly for 800 years.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)partdavid

3/27/09 1:16pm

Again—that's an actual \_war\_. People died in combat. There's no combat here. It's just folks being told to show up and ie.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)partdavid

3/27/09 1:16pm

Good question, Zack. I think the 500 years is a bit much myself, but as noted it's an exaggeration for story purposes. I agree that given a shorter time span the story is more plausible.

As to how it could go on, well think—Anan goes on and on in this ep about how much more sophisticated and intelligent the Eminiar-Vendikar solution to their war is. Maybe it's a sort of "racial snobbery" that keeps them at it, a sense of superiority to other races not as intelligent and able to come up with a "bloodless" solution to what they see as an endemic problem.

Also, part of it is a gordian knot idea: "Well, we'll never untie this mess, so fuck it, let's just cut through it and move on" . . . never admitting the problem hasn't gone away, just been made more convenient to deal with. It's done in simplistic terms, yeah—but at the time TV was a simplistic medium, moreso in a lot of ways than it is now, and people were willing to accept a lot on faith in the stories they were being told.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)partdavid

3/27/09 2:04pm

I think the horror stories of the past have kept the Eminiar-Vendikar societies in a state of fear that if they don't continue with the chambers the war will revert to the barbarism of the past, which one must conclude was really, really bad. At the point Kirk and co. intrude, it's become a well-ingrained social custom, a duty, a citizen's obligation. Sure, it may not be completely realistic, but at the time this was produced they were competing with Lost in Space and Gilligan's Island...so I can't be too critical.

Also, as for this: "...war in human history has become less and less civilized over time—stronger weapons, fewer ground rules." Maybe stronger weapons, but I'm not sure we have fewer ground rules than the wars of the Middle Ages and prior. They did their fair share of barbaric killing, raping and slave gathering for God and country. As for recorded history, I see no trend that warfare is becoming less civilized, but I do see it growing more efficient and the citizens of a society engaged in war...unless it happens on their home soil...becoming more removed from the process. The episode speaks a lot about that, I think.

As for before recorded history, I can't imagine the Klantu tribe's assault on the caves of Bantar, the bird people, was civilized in any conceivable way.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)partdavid

3/27/09 2:19pm

Yeah, that was a stupid over-generalization; I meant more the way Sherman's March made war less a game, and the way modern conflict throws aside all consideration for what used to be "out of play" civilians. My big problem with the Eminiar-Vendikar thing is that it forgoes the base facts of war in order to make its point.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)partdavid

3/27/09 2:52pm

First of all, the Klantu tribe were not TRYING to kill the Bantar, they only killed the ones who refused to be raped.

I thought the whole point of the Eminiar-Vendikar thing was that they had forgotten the base facts of war?

After all, they are simulating an all-out war in which civilians in large numbers are being killed... and then they actually insist that the civilians die. As someone else points out here, it's not so much a civilized form of warfare as a perfect version of the neutron bomb. No buildings are ever destroyed, only people!

Of course it's a clever but silly conceit. Name a Star Trek episode that isn't a clever-but-silly conceit, and I will show you a Star Trek episode that is merely a silly conceit.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

3/27/09 3:24pm

Good points, all. The more I think about it, despite the flaws in storytelling, the ep speaks pretty eloquently to the dangers of sanitizing war (or maybe depersonalizing is the word), wherein combatants are greatly removed from their targets/victims, e.g.: the Atom bomb where an entire city is destroyed by one push of a button from miles in the air, on to automated bombs and planes that do the dirty work.

There were times in history of gentlemen's wars where civilian casualties were considered unacceptable. Think those days are long gone though.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)partdavid

3/27/09 3:42pm

Zack, as far as out-of-play civilians and that...it depends what you mean by "modern conflict". I work for a U.S. Intelligence agency, and one of our missions is targeting support to the soldiers in the field. We go way, way out of our way to target the enemy accurately, and civilian casualties are not acceptable. You would probably not imagine how accurate we can get in modern warfare, as the only stories you probably hear are the instances where we are not accurate. That happens sometimes, but not anywhere near the level it did in say, Vietnam. When you go back to the days of WWII and the carpet bombing of entire cities, you're talking civilian casualties on a massive level.

But elsewhere in the world, civilians are fair play. We do our share of horrors, to be sure, but it's not policy...all I'm saying.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)partdavid

3/30/09 7:47am

I read a very interesting article on modern weapons, smart bombs, etc (I think it was in Jane's, but I may be mistaken). They were wondering why with all the incredibly increased accuracy (in WWII we had to totally fire bomb towns repeatedly—Dresden was in many ways much worse than Hiroshima—just in order to hit a target), civilian casualties have continued to rise...

Their conclusion: Increased accuracy, the whole bomb-down-the-chimney thing (which really does exist, no matter what some anti-war folks say) leads people to take greater risk, ie where we'd have totally avoided dropping a bomb

near a school, or UN camp before, now we can do it and only hit the target MOST OF THE TIME by far. I honestly believe we do not target civilians intentionally, but this has two effects:

As MASTER pointed out, we hear about them only when they go wrong—

and so does the rest of the world. Since we have vaunted the accuracy of our weapons everyone assumes that if we hit it, we aimed for it. And also, when we miss it makes a big bang and hurts a lot of people...

Perhaps counter-intuitively, higher accuracy inspires greater audacity, equals a rise in civilian casualties...

Lots of system have these side effects (a theme in the A Taste of Armageddon): It's like when we tried to solve the problem of unexploded ordnance by making it brightly coloured so it was easier to find/clean up/avoid, and instead kids pick it up because it's pretty and looks like toys...

One step forward, one step back...

There truly is no acceptable way to sanitize war. I'm with Kirk on this one.

[Reply](#)

- [alurinpartdavid](#)

3/30/09 10:30am

Nice analysis, Richelieu!

The Law of Unintended Consequences is probably the ruling principle of TOS, far more than the Prime Directive (though they're not unrelated). In one of the other threads here, people are debating the best villains of the movie series. But if you think about it, a lot of the TOS episodes don't really have villains, just systems created by the LUC.

Armageddon is a case in point.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 12:07pm

Clinical War

I found the idea of a conceptual war pretty mind-blowing back in the day. It has a disturbing logic to it and seems like it could reduce the impetus to end a war once and for all - no messy charred bodies in the street or bombed out buildings to have to rebuild. It reminds me of the bomb we were developing (can't remember what it's called) that would kill all the people but leave buildings and infrastructure intact.

Archons is one of those low-profile eps that I've forgotten. It sounds somewhat similar to the concept behind The Lottery.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 12:15pm

Actually, "A Taste of Armageddon" is closer to "The Lottery" in basic story terms, but I see what you mean.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 12:32pm

Yeah, I meant thematically, not plot-wise.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 12:34pm

Gotcha.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 4:02pm

You mean the neutron bomb. But I think it would still leave corpses.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 4:38pm

Thaaat's it, thanks! Yeah, guess you'd need quite a cleanup crew.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 4:50pm

All these comments about the impact of these episodes on people when they were kids (which goes for me too) reminds me of something I've always thought about Star Trek: it comprises one of the best courses in basic science fiction concepts for a growing, inquisitive kid.

After growing up with a good amount of ST episodes in your viewing diet, you just have no excuse for not having a good, comprehensive familiarity with all the standards like aliens, FTL travel, teleportation, various types of allegorical test-tube civilizations, time travel, etc.

Now, ideally you should grow up and go on to the higher-end written stuff, but at least I have some degree of respect and affection for Trekkies, unlike people who remain devoted to Star Wars as their primary fandom into adulthood.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 4:53pm

Good point, edked!

For the record, "Changeling" is the first Trek episode I have a memory of.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 7:45pm

My memories of most TOS episodes are confused with my memories of the James Blish novelizations. Which I suppose is cheating - because IIRC he usually tried to get inside the characters' heads and give them comprehensible motivations. When I've tried to rewatch the actual series, that sort of thing hasn't been on display much.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 8:18pm

I tend to like my sci-fi on the visual spectrum of movies/TV rather than literary. A friend recommended Ender's Game which I enjoyed, but I was not compelled to continue the series. Unless Dune qualifies as sci-fi which is one of my favorite books of all time.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 9:20pm

Dune totally qualifies. Why wouldn't it?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/27/09 9:29pm

OK, cool. Guess you're right, I thought it might veer toward fantasy, but thinking about it, it definitely has plenty of sci-y elements. Yay.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/29/09 9:49am

If Star Trek is sci-fi, then Dune definitely is.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

3/30/09 7:35am

I'm with ed— ST gave me love of SF and an eagerness to explore what was out there...

First episode: Doomsday Machine!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 5:29pm

Consternation and Alarm!

I don't know for sure, but I think that I may never have seen the Archons episode. And I thought I'd seen EVERY episode multiple times. How is this possible? Do I have to die in a fire for this flaw in my geekery?

::starts to collect kindling::

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/27/09 5:35pm

I have never seen "Gamesters of Triskelion". I don't know how it happened. For years, somehow it just never came on when I was watching. But I'd seen stills from it in various publications, so I knew that it existed, and what the basic plot was. At some point in my teens, i decided that I would actively avoid seeing it. So there is one TOS episode that I have never seen. I'm saving it. Someday, when the time is right, I will sit down with a DVD or a v-wafer or a TV pill or whatever the format of the future is, and watch an original Star Trek episode which is brand new to me.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/27/09 6:02pm

That's much more poetic than my plan: Hulu over the weekend. ;)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/27/09 8:31pm

Yeah, I wouldn't have that kind of restraint. Oldster story (spoken in creaky geezer voice): Back in my day, pre-VCRs, definitely pre-'nets, I bought the Star Trek Compendium so I could dutifully check off each new ep I caught after school to be \*sure\* I'd eventually see them all. Last ones to go (meaning months of torture till they finally appeared) were Turnabout Intruder and Tholian Web.

::shuffles off on walker w/tennis balls on the legs::

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/28/09 3:08pm

Okay, I just watched it on Hulu. WTF did the Red Hour have to do with anything else in the rest of the ep again?

Still like the Armageddon ep, though. I TOTALLY remembered that one.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/30/09 7:01am

Well, some of it is explainable:

Certain episodes were excluded in the first syndication packages (this varied by region) but I know that Archons and Turnabout intruder weren't included in the apckage we saw in Denver in the 1970's;..

I too checked them off religiously in a strange, multi-paged reading deice cunningly assembled from dead 'trees' (see plants in Wikipedia), called a 'book' (currently these things are used ot collect dust in older peoples houses;..)

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Schoolhouse Reck

3/31/09 2:17am

Thanks for the thought, Richelieu! I have seen Turnabout Intruder, though. (Of course, I grew up in DC, so who knows what their syndication package looked like.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [FortyTwo](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:05pm

Cultural homogeneity

As far as all planets in Star Trek having just one culture — On Babylon 5, they sidestepped the issue by saying that ethnic and cultural diversity were distinctly human traits. So, yes, every planet but Earth each had a single civilization with a single language (and a single religion, though I think Narns could choose one of a handful of prophets to follow).

Thinking about it, though, the same explanation couldn't be applied to Star Trek, considering diversity within Vulcans and Klingons.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)FortyTwo

3/27/09 11:57pm

Interesting work-around. It's why I personally loved the whole Xindi arc on Enterprise: a planet where 6 separate species developed sentient civilizations, each within their own distinct ecosphere - mammals, aquatic mammals, insectoid, reptilian, arboreal mammals and avian. Another fascinating and unique concept thanks to the Trekosphere.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

3/29/09 9:48am

Except it's also true for worlds that are not warp-capable. Enterprise encounters plenty of non-spacefaring civilizations, all of which are homogeneous. Except of course for the black-and-white/white-and-black guys.

I don't think it pays much to overintellectualize a narrative shortcut. That's what sucked the life out of TNG. In TOS, everyone in the universe spoke 20th century American English. In TNG, you had "universal translators", which really just made things less plausible, not more.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

3/29/09 4:09pm

I think the cultural and political simplifications are equally unlikely. If they're like humans (and in TOS they didn't even have extra forehead bumps) then they're going to be divided into many different cultures, which is going to make political unification difficult. Once you have political unification, it's a reasonable simplification to have a single point of contact, even though realistically you would almost never get to meet with the head of planetary government; you would deal with envoys at best.



"Happily, I just assume that everyone speaks English anyway, if I yell at them loudly enough. " I've been on the other end of that transaction. It turns out that I don't understand Russian, no matter how loudly it's spoken.

So what is "fascist" about the UFP?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)FortyTwo

3/30/09 6:57am

Cyclist/ Yes.

Alurin Yes....

I imagine he meant too militaristic/controlling for fascist. The Federation obviously lacks most of the necessary attributed of fascism: Strong-man leadership, a cult of personality, etc, even if the culture and morality are clearly moralistic and I'll sure I'd find them a bit stifling my own self....

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)FortyTwo

6/20/14 1:15pm

"Cultural homogeneity

As far as all planets in Star Trek having just one culture"

Zack's complaint was silly. It's nearly impossible to avoid doing a superficial gloss when dealing with just one culture. How are you going to deal with a second in anything other than a one sentence mention? And then, of course, you end up with the complaint, "gosh, the ambassador mentioned the wetferns, but then they dropped it..".

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 5:15pm

Book

I know a guy who's working on a book about the writing and development of the original Star Trek series. He has boxes of notes and memos from the studio the the writers and so on detailing specifically how they were almost constantly at odds over practically ever aspect of the show. I don't know, but I imagine there was a lot of argument over basic plausibility problems. With most but the hardest of hard sci-fi, as opposed to figuring out what to do on a typical Western, for instance, there have to be certain things simply allowed for or taken at face value, or the entire story just falls apart. These two episodes seem to be a reflection of that.

It should be an interesting book to read when it gets done. The guy did a similar kind of book about the TV series "I, Spy."

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gentle Herpes

3/27/09 8:26pm

Hitchcock hated having to waste time on the believability of plot elements in sacrifice of the overall emotional arc. He derisively called people (like me) who pick apart every plot inconsistency, "The Plausibles."

[Reply](#)

- [another spaceboy](#)Gentle Herpes

3/29/09 5:17am

and women. he hated women.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Gentle Herpes

3/29/09 9:45am

and half-sour pickles.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Gentle Herpes

3/30/09 7:02am

Which he called the 'squeezables' and the 'burpables' respectively....

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Gentle Herpes

6/20/14 1:25pm

Huh—what do you know. It's several years later and if his name is Cushman he just published the second volume of These Are the Voyages. [checks] Yup. Sounds like him, as he also did a book on I, Spy.

The first volume was terrific. It's effectively a primer for anyone who wants to learn how a tv series is produced, and what the day to day is like. The second is starting to drag. There's too much sameness to it: the nielsen ratings for every single episode, an abbreviation of the notes the writer was given, the shooting schedule, etc., so it starts to read too much like a reference work. Still, invaluable for anyone interested in how the series got made. I assume volume three (covering all of season three) is going to be a painful read.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

6/20/14 1:26pm

Well, yeah. I mean, he had to have a name for people who noticed that at times the writing wasn't worth shite.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 1:03pm

Star Trek spinoff I would like to see

The adventures of the USS Diligence, which follows around in Kirk's wake cleaning up all his messes. Captain's log, Stardate 3176.2. We have been orbiting Beta III for three weeks now, trying to put down the rioting that has been erupting since the destruction of Landru. "stun" settings are starting to prove ineffective. I look forward to next week's mission overseeing the peace settlement between Eminiar and Vendikar. That should be a relaxing gig!

[Reply](#)

- [anotherspaceboy](#)alurin

3/29/09 5:14am

seems to me they'd spend a good portion of their time giving alien abortions.

[Reply](#)

- [Misanthrope in Training](#)alurin

3/29/09 2:29pm

I would watch this just to see the growing realization in the mind of the captain of the Diligence, that James T. Kirk is actually the embodiment of some evil, womanizing god (little 'g') of chaos that has to be stopped before he can destroy yet another civilization.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)alurin

3/29/09 2:40pm

@Misanthrope: Hey, you're giving away the finale!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)alurin

3/30/09 7:32am

No joke, Alurin, I'm pretty sure you could pitch that...

[Reply](#)

- [Misanthrope in Training](#)alurin

3/30/09 2:37pm

Damn. I forgot the spoiler tag. Sorry Alurin. >\_<

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 1:41pm

Zack spells Khan correctly ...

And misspells "cognitive," thus yielding delicious irony.

Because there's nothing this crowd likes more than tasty irony.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

3/27/09 1:44pm

Off to the disintegration chamber for me, then.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

3/27/09 2:10pm

Before your molecules disperse, I'm pretty sure you meant to type "fReeing a planet from its dark overlords," methinks.

[Reply](#)

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

3/27/09 2:23pm

I will be the first to admit that spelling smack is weak, but the reason I pointed out Zack's alternate spelling of "cognitive" was that it seemed to me to be a "Me fail English?" moment. And I like the phrase "delicious irony" (which I first read in an Onion StatShot, BTW).

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Gargantuan Vermillion

3/27/09 2:36pm

I've toned down my spelling/grammar snarks (not completely, alas) but I understand that the volume of work the writers have and the speed in which they must produce will cause some errors. I mentioned the above because it is clearly a typo, not a misspelling, and gives the sentence a bit of a different meaning.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:47am

Buried alive....buried alive...

KHAAAAAANNNNNN!!!!

KHAAAAAANNNNNN!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 1:47pm

I had an argument with a friend about the best Trek movie baddies. While no one can argue that Khan isn't the best, I argued Commander Kruge was second best, and he argued it was General Chang. First, Kruge arguably defined what Klingons would act like for most of the TNG-era and beyond. The Klingon bastard also shot one of his own men, threatened to shoot another, had a mean-ass Klingon hound, killed Kirk's son, killed his own lover, blew up the USS Grissom, and was willing to burn with Kirk on the Genesis Planet just to get what he wanted.

While Chang is great, he's not that great of a Klingon. He kinda plays the typical, moustache-twirling villain (albeit well), but he dresses like a dandy and quotes Shakespeare like he's doing an impression of Khan reciting Moby Dick. I've seen Khan, and you're no Khan.

He gets points for bolting that eye patch to his skull, so I'll grant it's a close one.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 2:44pm

Whoopie Goldberg is the best Trek movie villian.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 3:24pm

Trek Dork, technically that's correct, but once he got what he wanted he would have most likely killed them anyway. If not, their lives as they knew them were over anyway when they met Kruge.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/30/09 7:49am

Sheesh! no love for V-ger?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:50am

electronically controlled homes will develop conscious initiative and attempt to impregnate a human woman so they can spread the

Heh..that last bit works on two levels.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 12:53pm

Doh! the comment was about the "like fucking clockwork" part, but it got cut off.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 1:10pm

Why didn't you just swap subject and comment? Or just use "like fucking clockwork" as a subject?

I'm trying to help here.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

3/27/09 7:48pm

"I think it's got something to do with our obsession for putting the heart over the head at all costs, a philosophical imperative that's as screwed up morally as it is physically impossible. "

Yeah, but you gotta get the chicks to watch, too.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 11:39am

Looking forward to Khan

In the spirit of this week's Q&A: This is where the mindworm lives.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/27/09 11:42am

ZAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

[Reply](#)

- [OnanRulz](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/27/09 2:17pm

GO PACKERS!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/27/09 3:11pm

STAYYYYYYYY!!!

[Reply](#)

- [OnanRulz](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

3/27/09 3:26pm

"This song's in the

Public domain.

That's why we've used

it twiiiiice."

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 2:49pm

Tapping the Vein

Zach - did you ever read Clive Barker's comic series "Tapping the Vein". One issue has "In the Hills, The Cities" with typically beautiful and grotesque artwork. If you haven't you should check it out.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

3/27/09 4:00pm

I've never had the guts to read Barker, but that story sounds frea-kay. Dude's got one fucked-up imagination.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Breakfast Balls

3/27/09 7:38pm

I've never read any of Barker's comic book stuff, but I could see it being cool; the guy had a pretty ridiculous prose style, but he came up with some amazingly out there concepts.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

1/11/14 6:35pm

I've noticed how many of these episodes predict things (sorta) that are happening now. For instance, think about all the destruction that we can do by computers. You don't have to wage a conventional war against a nation... but if someone could hack into our government's computers, think of how much destruction you could do with the push of a button. Think about how cyber criminals can destroy people by hacking into their computers, stealing their credit card info and identity and ruining their credit. That's along the same lines as the Armageddon episode, only on a smaller scale and without people willingly killing themselves. But also think about how the Japanese would willingly commit suicide during times of war ("falling on your sword") back in the old days.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Jason Mucci

6/20/14 1:10pm

I wonder what the actual number of Japanese willing to commit hari-kari or seppuku would have been. For all that's been made of it, the average person, regardless of indoctrination, is all about self-preservation.

[Reply](#)

- [tim\\_l](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 3:02pm

Henchmen

What's with the black condoms on those guys' heads? Functional or merely a fashion statement?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)tim\_l

3/27/09 3:08pm

Well, they're fucking with your head, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)tim\_l

3/27/09 4:04pm

Heyooooo!

[Reply](#)

- [Prankster](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 9:30pm

Clearly, I am not of the Body

I'm amazed no one's mentioned it yet, but doesn't it seem like the writers of "Angel" just flat out ripped off the "Archons" episode for their Jasmine storyline in season 4? With multiple episodes, that storyline was able to do more with the concept (including playing up the anti-religious allegory) and really amped up the creepiness, but clearly Trek deserves the points for doing it first.

Honestly... I liked both these episodes. Of course they're ridiculous in practical terms, but hello, that's Star Trek for you. I liked the thematic points ("Armageddon" is even more relevant these days, and I love that the message of "Archons" is essentially "Hey, atheists, stop being such pussies and put your foot down") and I think the dialogue in "Archons" achieves the rare feat of being alien and weird and slightly florid without being campy. "The Red Hour is upon us" is still a little unnerving to me...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Prankster

3/27/09 11:01pm

"Masque of the Red Death" anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [lysis](#)Zack Handlen

3/29/09 1:01pm

I don't care what you all think  
but the colours in "A Taste of Armageddon" are amazing. Particularly the purples and greens and reds and blues in the corridor around the disintegration chamber.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)lysis

3/30/09 6:51am

Yeah man, I agree: Classic trek and LSD are an amazing mix!

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 5:52pm

nice Demon Seed reference.

i recently added it to my Netflix queue. i saw it a long time ago but it was too odd for me as a child.

anyway, you know what bugs me the most about Return of the Archons? (i mentioned this last week, but here it is again) one of two times that i can recall Kirk sitting out the landing party (the other being Catspaw) are the two times that the landing party really gets their shit fucked up, with guys ending up dead or zombified or whatever. it just screams plot device.

that said, i really do like Armageddon. the Order 24 stuff adds an interesting wrinkle to the "can't we all just get along" ethos of Starfleet.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bZack Handlen

6/20/14 1:08pm

I tried, Zack, but your relentlessly cutesy reviews get so fucking depressing. Between that, the absurd carryings on over, gee, someone somewhere used that kind of plot before, the strange rantings about things the show has to do, apparently in willful ignorance of the plain fact that tv series do indeed have all sorts of necessary limitations, and your peculiar inability to come close to retaining what you claim to have just watched, and you've managed to take all the fun out of this. Christ.

Hereafter I'll read the comments only. Do things differently.

.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 8:39pm

Kirk's Favorite General Order?

Order 69, heh heh.

Sorry, it's damn late on a Friday. I've always kinda liked "A Taste of Armageddon," because it believes so much in its silliness. And I'm right there with the whole mind control freaking me out. Though, that's not the worst thing to happen to McCoy's mind this season . . .

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

3/27/09 2:46pm

vest phaser

My favorite part of "Archons" is seeing Spock pull his hand phaser out of his vest like an old-tyme pocket watch.

[Reply](#)

- [okdatapad](#)Zack Handlen

9/02/14 12:06am

ben affleck was terrible in this movie

[Reply](#)



## *Star Trek: "Space Seed" / The Wrath Of Khan*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published April 3, 2009

[Comments \(256\)](#)



In the real world, there is such a thing as an unwinnable scenario. Our lives are not always designed with plot loop-holes, third act twists, or cavalry charges built in; if you're reading this, you're lucky enough to have lived long enough to get to right here and right now, but there are no promises past that. There are no promises I'll make it to the end of this sentence. (Well, technically, I guess I would've had to've gotten to the end because you're looking at a page full of many, many sentences, but I had no guarantee I'd make it when I started typing, in that particular moment, which, if you follow me, is the point.) There are times when there's no good choice left, and there are times when there are no choices at all. Maybe that's what they're talking about when they say a child has lost his innocence—the realization that, no, Virginia, the fat man stuck in your chimney is not going to magic himself away. Unless you call maggots "magic."

That's probably why we love a hero who can find a way out of anything. Somebody like James T. Kirk, captain of the Enterprise, who faces death, disaster, and destruction, and dispels them every time without breaking a sweat. (A little sweat, maybe. Just enough to look totally awesome.) It gives us the illusion that with enough willpower and courage, any problem can be solved. Getting screwed over by the Kobayashi Maru? Think outside the box, and you'll find a way. But in order for good storytelling to rise to the level of art, it needs to have at least some passing relationship with truth; and that means acknowledging there aren't many happy endings in the world that don't require sacrifice.

The original series is unquestionably deserving of its place in the annals of TV history, and one of its greatest strengths is its willingness to let some darkness into its world. But even *Star Trek* had its limits. It's not until the second movie of the already critically suspect film franchise that it started bringing that darkness home. We've had our share of dead crew members, but for all that, we've never lost anyone we really cared about. It wasn't till the big screen that tragedy actually hit home. There is a lot to love about *Star Trek: The Wrath Of Khan*—its expert pacing, sense of adventure, terrific script, superb performances (one of Shatner's best, no question), and just totally bad-ass action set pieces—but what always stays with me, no matter how many times I watch it, is Spock's death. Regardless of what happened in the later sequels, that scene alone, and the weight it carries, is enough make this more than just the best of *Trek*.

But before we get to that, how about a little "Space Seed"? Like a lot of you (I'm assuming), I'd seen many times before I ever got a chance to watch the episode that inspired it. The movie works fine on its own; the conflict between Khan

and Kirk is so instantly clear that back story becomes almost irrelevant. But watching "Seed" makes the characters richer, and gives their struggle more history. It's like putting together a puzzle; you already know what the picture's going to be, but seeing it finished has its own satisfaction. Plus, it's really just a terrific episode.

The *Enterprise* comes across a seemingly dead ship in the middle of space; the ship doesn't respond to any hailing attempts, but the *Enterprise* computers are able to pick up multiple (very slow) heartbeats inside. Soon enough, they identify the vessel as the *S.S. Botany Bay* (funny how every time anyone says that, I always hear saying it in my head), from the late 20 century. We get a brief, but important, lecture about Earth's history from that period—our attempts at selective breeding to create a race of supermen (and women), which resulted in The Eugenics Wars, humankind's last major global conflict. Even though we don't know exactly what we're in for, we're starting to have our suspicions, and it's pretty sure whatever's on the Bay isn't going to be pleasant.

Kirk beams over, along with McCoy, Scotty, and Marla McGivers, an expert in 20th century history with a passion for painting and an obsession with strong, single-minded men of ages past. There's a great shot of her in her quarters right before she gets called to the transporter; the room is stuffed with art and bric-a-brac of older times, and tells you basically everything you need to know about the character without her saying a word. On board the Bay, Marla soon has a chance to show off her expertise, as the boarding party finds bunk after bunk of apparently comatose people in gold fishnets and Speedos. (Or something.) Marla informs Kirk that this is a "sleeper" ship, designed for the incredibly long time it took to get anywhere via space travel in the pre-warp days. Somebody turns on the lights, one of the passengers goes into shock, and before you can say "Perdition's flame," that passenger gets sent to the *Enterprise* for some "modern" health care. By amazing coincidence, that passenger just happens to be the leader of this band of frozen travelers, the magnificent, deadly Khan Noonien Singh.

Things go much as you'd expect—and I don't intend that as a slight. One of "Seed"'s strengths is that it's full of strong characters bouncing off each other, and the slow build from Khan's arrival, to his chats with Kirk, to his eventual attempts to take the *Enterprise* as his own, have an enjoyable inevitability to them. As soon as Khan is discovered for who he is, the boldest and brightest result of Earth's dabbling in selective breeding, there's no question he's going to pit his will against the captain's. How could he not?

Another great element of "Seed," and one that plays nicely in conjunction with *Wrath*, is the Kirk-Spock interplay; they get a couple of great chats together, first discussing the various repercussions of the discovered Earth vessel, and then debating the danger Khan represents. (Kirk grants Khan access to the ship's technical manuals, a move that irks Spock considerably; the way it's played, you get a sense of the two's history together, like Kirk's been pulling this sort of shit for years, and Spock always has to clean up afterwards.) The friendship between the show's two leads has been so well established by now that it's easy to take it for granted, but episodes like this one show that the connection's a real one. It's a relationship between equals, and it's not hard to imagine both characters having a hard time finding that kind of a match elsewhere. (At this point, anyone considering the word "bromance" needs to stop doing that.)

The only weak point of "Seed" is the romance between Khan and Marla. Marla's infatuation with Khan isn't quite enough to explain why she's willing to go along with his attempts to take over the ship so quickly. Ricardo Montalban's chemistry is undeniable—he even manages to make some goofy tai chi movements work—but we're talking about a woman so enthralled with a stranger that she'll betray everyone she knows just to keep his favor. The scenes between them are a mixed bag, with Marla generally reduced to standing there staring while Khan pontificates and futzes with her hair. It's not a complete loss. Montalban's intensity could sell just about anything. But given the weight her character is given, it's too bad that Marla isn't stronger.

Something I always forget: Khan tries to take over the *Enterprise*, and he actually succeeds. Sure, Kirk manages to beat him in a one-on-one fight at the climax (the doubling here is even more blatant than usual), but after the initial invasion of Khan's newly awakened buddies, Kirk and his team are easily subdued and held captive. Khan shows Spock and the rest of the bridge crew that he's got James T. in a decompression chamber (do we ever see this again?) and that if no one is willing to go to Khan's side, he'll have Kirk killed. Nobody caves, so points to our captain there, but if it weren't for Marla (either growing a spine or losing one) sneaking away and freeing Kirk herself, the game would be basically over. It's a nice twist that, again, plays into the upcoming movie: sometimes you just get screwed, and having a bit of luck on hand is always a good thing.

For all you could blame Marla for her initial decision to side with Khan, the episode does go out of its way to show that most of our human leads share her admiration of the man. (Spock's reaction here is, as always, priceless.) It's the only way you could justify the ending. Once our heroes manage to subdue Khan and his people, Kirk holds a tribunal to decide their fate. Instead of assigning them to a "Reorientation Center" (which sounds positively Orwellian), Kirk opts to drop the whole lot of them off on a nearby planet, Alpha V. It's a dangerous, untamed world that will offer Khan an opportunity to use his skills to the fullest without endangering anybody else. Khan accepts the challenge, and is pleased when Marla agrees to join him. Apparently, her double-cross only endeared her to him further. (We hope. Otherwise, things could get awkward.) One of the coolest thing about watching "Seed" and *Wrath of Khan* back to back is that the ending of "Seed" really does leave questions unanswered. Kirk muses what it would be like to come back and see the progress Khan makes in a hundred years, but as a viewer, you can't help wondering if Kirk's math is a little off. This is a group that managed to take over the entire Earth. Left to their own devices for long, who knows what they could accomplish? Kirk isn't resolving the conflict. He's just delaying it. Eventually, Khan would have to come back, and he'd have to defeat the one man still alive who's capable of beating him.

When *Wrath of Khan* hit theaters in 1982, it had a lot to prove. The original series had been off the air for over a decade, and its first big screen adventure had opened to poor reviews. After Robert Wise's excessively serious-minded direction, it seemed like a good idea to bring in some fresh blood. In this case, that meant Nicholas Meyer, director of *Time After Time*, a neat sci-fi romance about H.G. Wells and Jack the Ripper. (Um, they're not the ones who get romantically involved. That would've been a whole other movie, really.) Meyer decided to make a *Trek* movie that distanced itself from the series' increasingly stultified mythology while at the same time getting to the root of what made the show so fun to begin with: strong characters, space battles, and freaky alien things.

The result is, well, awesome, right? I think I've seen at least twenty times by now. There are probably better movies out there (maybe), but it belongs in that rare category of things I never get tired of watching. *Ghostbusters*, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *Die Hard*, *Salo*—you know, the sort of thing that, it comes on the TV, and you get sucked in for the duration. You anticipate lines so much, you start to hear them in your head, and instead of fading over time, the emotional moments somehow become even more so with each successive viewing. Like a kind of Pavlovian response: oh, E.T.'s dying? Ah, fuck it, time to go all gooey again.

As I get older, I appreciate the movie more and more for its economy. Even if you don't compare it to the bloated indulgences of the first flick (whose biggest crime, apart from wasting its emotional crux on characters we've never met before, is that it takes everything sooooo daaaaaaamn seeeeeeriously), this moves at an expert clip, setting up conflicts with precision and constantly keeping the pressure on the narrative, so that while we never feel rushed, we never feel like we're just moseying from place to place, either. It's the kind of professionalism you don't see a lot of these days—with every blockbuster hitting theaters at two hours and change, to watch a space opera that manages to get the job done in under a 120 minutes, without a single minute left to bad mugging or pointless effects, is a thrill.

And talk about your iconic sequences! There's the opening training fake out—the tape I had growing up was off network TV, and we missed the first ten minutes of the movie, so while I always had the "director's cut" footage, it wasn't till I bought the DVD that I finally saw the real beginning. Then there's Chekov and Capt. Terrell (Paul Winfield) making an unfortunate discovery in universal geography ("THIS IS CETI ALPHA V!") and the horrible squirmy ear-worms that follow soon after. Montalban's really impressive physique. (According to Meyer, this was not faked. The dude was cut.) Khan blindsiding Kirk in his stolen Reliant.

A moment for that scene, because it's one of my favorite; the Reliant meets up with the Enterprise and won't respond to Uhura's hailing. Before anybody knows what's going on, Khan starts firing—but he doesn't go for the killshot. He's heard of this thing called Genesis, a life-giving bomb, and he wants to know more about it. ("Seed" doesn't really get into it, but in *Wrath*, we get to see Khan's arrogance struggling against his lack of information; he's not stupid by a long shot, but the limitations imposed on him by his twentieth century training keep hindering his strategies.) Kirk agrees to pass on the info, but only so he can buy some time—and even though this is really the oldest trick in the book, note how Khan's pushiness here never lets up, and we never feel like Kirk is at his leisure to explore other options—long enough to code in a frequency that shuts down the Reliant's shields and let's the Enterprise get in a few hits of her own.

I'm getting chills just thinking about it. Words can't really describe how immensely satisfying this is to watch; man, just the look on Kirk's face when he says, "Here it comes." On his commentary track for the DVD (which is excellent), Meyer talks about how he kept making Shatner repeat a scene until he got bored with it, at which point all the ham went away and actual acting came out. *Wrath* still has its moments of near-camp, but it never loses its honesty. This is a more subdued Kirk than we've seen before; older, sadder, and a bit less sure of himself. The age factor is something the series would trot out with increasing regularity, but *Wrath* does it first and does it best, in no small part because when Kirk says, "I feel old," he really fucking means it.

There's a lot here worth talking about—and I'm thinking, that's what the comments are for, because I've already dragged this on long enough. But before I yield the floor, I do have to talk about that what happens to Mr. Spock. For all it's triumph, *Wrath* still has its share of sorrow. Khan himself is a tragedy, a brilliant leader undone by rage and ego; watching "Seed" makes his line about his dead wife land all the harder, and no matter how many times I see this movie, part of me still kind of hopes he'll find some way out in the end. Although he couldn't, not really. It's a question that "Seed" raised and took ten years before answering: how does someone like Khan live in a reality where he's outdated, outmatched, and obsolete? He can't. Maybe if Ceti Alpha VI hadn't blown up, maybe if Marla hadn't died, maybe if Chekov hadn't stumbled across maybe the worst planet to stumble across—maybe things might have been different. But that's not what happened.

And as for Spock... Every time. I cry every goddamn time. Oh sure, he comes back eventually, but I don't think that matters. I think the scene works because we recognize the truth in it. Just like we need heroes who always win because we know that nobody wins forever, Spock's sacrifice is moving because it's honesty without pretension. This is what happens. You will lose your friends, no matter how important they are to you, no matter how much you can't imagine life without them. You will lose them. And in the end, you're just standing on the other side of the wall, hand on the glass, as they break down, piece by piece, and you can't be there, and you can't make it better. All you can do is mouth the old pleasantries and pretend there's some nobility in all of it. In the end, all you can do is watch.

It's not a depressing movie—there's a definite "life goes on" vibe in the conclusion—but that it's willing to be that bleak is part of what makes it great. And now I just want to watch it again.

#### **Grades:**

**"Space Seed": A**

**Star Trek: The Wrath Of Khan: A**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- So, how much of Khan's crew is from "Seed" and how much are new recruits? It looks like he got the lot out of an Italian *Road Warrior* rip-off.
- Kirk's eulogy for Spock ("Of all the souls I have encountered in my travels, his was the most... human.") used to bug me growing up; everybody knows Spock didn't want to be human, right? But there's another way you can read it; that by "human," Kirk means that Spock represented the best of us. He was the person we wanted to be.
- Never a huge fan of Kirk getting a son. But hey, he won't be around for long...

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (253)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Prison Wine](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:26pm

Of all the souls I have encountered in my travels, his was the most...

..... HUMAN.

[Reply](#)

- [cybersybil](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 12:33pm

Oh thank God, PW, I can't start new threads at work and I'm on the verge of tears just remembering Spock's death and funeral. Awesome write-up, Zack. This movie's so much a part of my psyche, I hadn't even thought that the DVD would have commentary and now I must go out and purchase it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 12:37pm

the "Human" line used to piss me off when I was a kid also!

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 12:38pm

...cut. That Montalban guy was ripped.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 12:52pm

I dunno. I buy Zack's interpretation, but it STILL bothers me. Kind of species-centric, even if the intent was good.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 1:14pm

I think the pause before the word indicates that Kirk knows that what he's saying might be considered an insult to his dead friend, but that in this case, he means it as the highest compliment — that his friend represented everything he thought was potentially good about humanity itself and what it could achieve.

The line gets a callback in Undiscovered Country, when one of the Klingons calls McCoy out on his use of it.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 1:26pm

Well you could interpret it as Kirk just being Kirk, somewhat self-centered even when eulogizing his best friend, projecting what he wanted Spock to be onto Spock and implicitly believing that he knew Spock better than Spock knew himself. I'm making it sound like I think that ruins the moment, but for me at least the moment was powerful enough to absorb all this. Kirk was still being as sincere and heartfelt as he knew how to be, and anyway losing someone so close would make someone at a loss to say anything at all so you can't really blame him for his unintentionally (mildly; Spock is technically as Human as he is Vulcan) inappropriate word choice.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 1:38pm

I dunno blasmo, the way I always saw it was that Kirk is simply fighting back tears, and I think the roughness of his voice when he says the word "human" bears that out. Definite lump-in-the-throat moment. And Shatner's acting—with maybe one or two exceptions his best in all of Trek—makes it all the more powerful.

[Reply](#)

- [gusano cerebro](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 1:56pm

Why can't you start new threads at work? What strange rule allows you to post replies, but not initiate them?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 2:03pm

I don't know, but it's definitely a pain in the ass. sometimes I can get the skyfire browser on my mobile device's to post a new thread, but more often than not it bugs out on me.

maybe I should open a ticket with the help desk... I wonder how that would go over?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 2:08pm

In the same way that we use the word "mankind" also includes women, I always felt that Kirk was using "human" to indicate all the things that we as humans value most. And Kirk specifically states that Spock's \*soul\* is human which doesn't contradict that the \*man\* was Vulcan.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 2:30pm

Seeing this in the theater, the audience laughed after the word "human," when it cut to Lt. Savvik, because Kirstie Alley looks like she's glowering at Kirk or something for saying that. The cut is quick though. Too quick to see that she's crying. Had they given her a bit more of a close-up on that, it probably wouldn't have provoked the laugh.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:04pm

Yeah, regardless, Shatner conveys a hell of a lot of emotion with the pause. Yup. I'm watching it tonight. I can only imagine how many people in this forum will. Nice cultural moment, of a sort.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:11pm

I think I may have to watch it again as well. it's been a while and I wouldn't mind a re-screening.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:24pm

Yes, that one gulp is about the pinnacle of Shat's acting career. Well played.

[Reply](#)

- [Stuff N Fluff](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:27pm

What if at the end of Unforgiven, Clint says about Morgan Freeman's character, "Of all the souls I have encountered in my travels ... his was the most white"

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:29pm

Well then I would've laughed my ass off at that movie.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 3:50pm

Of all the apples I have encountered, his was the most . . . orange.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 5:54pm

Thank you Stuff N Fluff. THAT's what I'm talking about.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 7:07pm

He gulps and swallows, his lip twists and "...human"

It's a shout out to Spock's long struggle with his heritage, as well as his struggles with McCoy. He knew that Spock would look at him the same way that Saavik did, and if he hadn't been grieving he would have laughed at the joke.

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive Deleted](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 8:16pm

In Undiscovered Country doesn't Spock say that Kirk's remark that "everybody's human" is insulting to him?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Prison Wine

4/03/09 8:25pm

I bought the DVD when KKKHHHHHHAAAAANNNNNN died, and I actually surprised myself at the time by realizing that it wasn't in my collection somewhere. Although I do love VI I think II is probably the best straight-up movie of the films made by the original cast. When I rewatched it after buying the DVD I must admit I did cry following the death of Spock - between Shatner, the bagpipes (I'm Scottish OK? I find them stirring, dammit!), and the whole feel of it... I think it's by far Star Trek's most affecting moment.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Prison Wine

4/04/09 3:47am

People talk about the curse of odd-numbered Star Trek movies, but really, there were only four really good ones in all. Kahn, Spock's Return, Undiscovered Country, Borg Time-Travel. Star Trek IV: Save the Whales was hardly what would be called "good".

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Prison Wine

4/04/09 2:43pm

Skipskatte: actually, there were only three good ones. Search For Spock could hardly be called "good", though I suppose it could be termed "marginally better than Save The Whales".

And I speak as one who spent far too many hours in late adolescence watching Star Trek III at the \$1 theater.

And juggernaut is right, people. Spock was half-human. So, Stuff n Fluff, it's not like Clint Eastwood calling Morgan Freeman white, it's like Ken Norman calling tiger Woods white.

[Reply](#)

- [ChicJanowicz](#)Prison Wine

4/04/09 9:35pm

"Save the whales" (ST:IV) was a fun movie. Are we supposed to not like it now?



[Reply](#)

- [Deus Ex Macaroni](#)Prison Wine

4/04/09 9:50pm

But III had Reverend Jim from taxi as the Klingon captain! That's gold right there.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Prison Wine

4/05/09 5:13am

Of course anyone can like IV, but now they know they're wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Prison Wine

4/05/09 11:26am

ChicJanowicz: You were never supposed to like it, you philistine.

[Reply](#)

- [Crankypants McGee](#)Prison Wine

4/06/09 12:12am

Excuse me, where are the nuclear wessels? Are you sure it isn't time for a colorful metaphor? I haven't seen Save the Whales it for years, but it sure made me happy when I was a kid, and for that I shall love it forever.

Wrath of Khan is great in an entirely different way, of course. For my money, the worst Star Trek movie is either the first one or that last one, with that weird bald kid having endless boring conversations with Patrick Stewart.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Prison Wine

4/06/09 9:53am

Ah, Dr. Soong, you have unintentionally hit on exactly \*why\* Save The Whales is a bad movie, and a bad \*Star Trek\* movie, and a lousy followup to II/III. Wrath of Khan is a great movie precisely because Kirk finally has to deal with the consequences of his actions, whether it's marooning Khan on Ceti Alpha VI or tapping Carol Marcus without a condom. In the original series, everything's back to normal in the next episode, and there are never any consequences. Wrath of Khan ends in triumph stained with tragedy. In the Search for Spock, they get Spock back, but they have to sacrifice the Enterprise itself. Everything has a cost, you see. In The Voyage Home, all that is tossed aside, everything is reset to normal, nothing has a cost, and nothing has weight. Who cares if Spock dies? he'll be back. Who cares if the Enterprise is destroyed? we'll build a new one. Why not throw your entire career away to save your friend? you'll be given an opportunity to save the world and get your career back.

Wow, it's probably been 20 years since I thought about how mad that movie made me. Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [Crankypants McGee](#)Prison Wine

4/06/09 2:29pm

alurin, isn't that "reset" a hallmark of both original Star Trek and TNG? Great Big Happenings Occur, but by the end of the episode, Kirk is back to normal, the ship is repaired, Spock has his emotions in check again, Deanna's son turns out to be a mystical alien creature that no one ever mentions again, Picard's Borg implants are removed and he doesn't even have a scar, etc. You can almost watch any of the episodes in any order. In a sense, Star Trek II and III are the aberrations, and IV is a return to form. A form that may irritate you, but there it is.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Prison Wine

4/06/09 3:15pm



Yes, Crankypants, it was the return to form that irritated me. Or, to put it another way, I think that the power of WoK was partly derived from the violation of form. At the end of WoK, a price had finally been paid. it represented a moment of maturity. III was a weaker movie by far, but there was still a net price paid. IV said "aw, fuck it, let's go back to hitting the reset button". So, first of all, that makes IV a much weaker film. And while it doesn't exactly retroactively RUIN WoK for me, it does tarnish the Spock dying scene a bit.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Prison Wine

4/11/09 2:08pm

Actually, second chapters in a trilogy are often great, because they don't have to spend time on setups or satisfying conclusions. See "The Empire Strikes Back".

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)alurin

6/20/14 4:47pm

That kid's movie? Yeah, that was ok.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

6/20/14 4:53pm

While we're talking about big small moments, if you ever watch it again check out Shatner's glance towards the front of the chapel in the penultimate scene in Balance of Terror. That's a man who finds no comfort there.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Jack Straw

6/23/14 9:38am

Your words make no sense. I feel like Picard trying to understand Dathon.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:12pm

Best Star Trek of all?

I've read it in other places and have had conversations with friends to the idea that Wrath of Khan is the best Star Trek anything, episode, movie, you name it. What do you guys think? Agree? Disagree? Any other candidates for the title?

For me, I like it because it is so human and emotionally relatable. Star Trek is often called optimistic and in a way, it showcases very timeless ideals. No matter what the future holds, things like friendship, courage, love, and sacrifice will be around and worthy of honor.

"You are and ever shall be my friend. Live long and prosper"

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 2:05pm

It's my favorite, and no other film approaches its depth. The other good films in the series — like Star Trek IV and First Contact — are highly entertaining, but not compelling in the sense that you'd watch them over and over again.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 2:19pm

Have to agree. My wife loves STIV, and I have a soft spot in my heart for Search For Spock and Undiscovered Country, but Khan is the one I will always want to see again. Someone noted above that the movie punches way above its weight,

and I'll go with that. Plot holes and certain deficiencies in the acting aside (I'm looking at you, Merrit Buttrick), WoK outclasses any of the other Trek films.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 2:34pm

If there has to be a choice of a single emblematic ultimate Trek entity then Khan would probably be it. CityOTEOForever might be second, but it lacks all the requisite swashing and buckling.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 2:54pm

I like The Undiscovered Country also, but I don't think there's another incarnation of "Trek" that captures the lightning in a bottle quite like Khan. It's got it all - drama, action, a good sense of context within the larger canon, and it works on a lot of levels - as a meditation on revenge, aging, and mortality, as a naval war story in space, a story of sacrifice, and of course, as a star trek movie

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 2:55pm

Agreed, PM. We're re-watching DS9 from the start at our house courtesy of Netflix, and I've been struck again at how different it is from the other shows. TNG is distinguished from TOS mostly by dint of a larger cast, a different captain, and the fact that there could be no interpersonal conflict within the crew. DS9 turned that last on its head brilliantly, I thought—especially when Avery Brooks would stop phoning it in as Sisko and actually show an interest if a good script landed in his lap.

@ Tinsel, the swashing and buckling do a great service to WoK, for sure. I don't think any of the other Trek movies is as action-packed, tension-filled, AND fun to watch all at once.

[Reply](#)

- [Johnny Assay](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 3:45pm

I'd submit "All Good Things..." (the TNG finale) as one of the best moments of any Trek, Patrick Stewart's performance is first-rate, and the "anti-time" MacGuffin, though a little contrived, allowed the series to be wrapped up in a very satisfying way.

Then again, I may just have a soft spot for it because I first saw it when I was 15.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 3:53pm

TNG's "The Inner Light" is something that I'd argue is another great way to really introduce the show. It's one of those episodes I think anyone- Sci-fi fan or not, can really enjoy.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 3:55pm

My favorite TNG episode is still "The Inner Light," which is one of the most sublime and beautiful hours of television I've ever seen. I'd have to add that to my "first time all over again" list from the Q&A thread.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 4:21pm

@ Right Wingnut: I'm afraid I'm going to have to ask you to leave my brain. There's barely enough room in here for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 4:46pm

@ Screaming: I believe it is you, not I, that is the intruder. Leave my brain alone!

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 4:59pm

I disagree goon. There was always a military aspect to it, the neutral zone and the war with the Romulans was brought up in the first ten episodes, and there is definitely a policing aspect from the original show. I think the best way to think about it is the English Navy of the 18th and 19th centuries, part explorers, part guardian of colonies and the shipping lanes and part warriors.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 6:17pm

@ Wingnut: But it's so comfy and warm in here!

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 6:24pm

Yeah, it's definitely between Kahn and The Undiscovered Country. I'd have a hard time choosing between the two.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 6:56pm

I'm inclined more toward Wrath of Khan, versus Undiscovered Country, if only because it seems more in line with the spirit of the television show. Most of the time, prior to Star Trek III, Kirk would have conflicts with Klingons, but they were respected adversaries. They had clashing ideologies, but Kirk didn't view them as inferior. But in Undiscovered Country it seemed like they abandoned this whole idea of the evolved sensibilities of the Federation- humans had learned not to be racist toward each other, but Klingons? Fuck those dirty alien bastards. I think it still works as a movie, but I count that as a mark against it as a Star Trek movie. Yes, I've wasted way too much time thinking about this.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 9:00pm

VI is a surprisingly good film, and has the same autumnal feeling that Khan has, but with a sense of closure (that Generations strives for and misses). I do, in my brain, like DS9, but you know what seems to have spoiled it for me? Battlestar Galactica. Someone mentioned In The Pale Moonlight further up the thread, which I watched recently, and it's a great episode, and it's dark, and it's a good (if a slightly, erm, precise performance from Avery Brooks), but it just doesn't stand up next to the best of BSG. I know it's not a fair comparison, and I know it's as dark as the Star Trek universe ever got (with the maybe-exception of Year of Hell) but still... Khan almost matches that darkness - the heros lose that which is most precious to them seems VERY BSG to me.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 9:47pm

I've got to vote for Balance of Terror, City on the Edge... and First Contact. Undiscovered Country is OK, but...  
I'd never show it to a non-fan saying: Here this is a good movie.  
IV I hate like poison... All Good Things is very good, and I've not seen a lot of DS9...

[Reply](#)

- [albtraum](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/03/09 10:49pm

goon - regarding the phrase "inkling of Thermidor" - Well done.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/04/09 10:28am

@wingnut and harris - I'd forgotten the name of the episode, I just got all misty-eyed just reading the synopsis on Memory Alpha. Best TNG ep, IMHO.

@harris - I'm about to do DS9 from the beginning just like you're doing (as soon I'm finished with Enterprise - better than I remembered!). All ST has great episodes, but I think DS9 is best as a SERIES.

@most - agree WoK is best ST movie, First Contact is close second for me.

@all - recommended viewing: give STV:TFF another go. No, you won't find an unremembered gem, but there is some excellent writing and acting there, and the Kirk/Spock/McCoy friendship is as tight as it ever got.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/04/09 10:38am

And the Scotty/Uhura relationship is as WTF? as ever. I think Shatner understood the dynamic between the main three very well, but he seemed unsure of what to do with his other co-stars. But I think it's better than Nemesis, and while it's my least favorite of the original cast movies, it's not so far behind The Motion Picture that we should forget about it entirely.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/04/09 9:13pm

"Row, row, row your boat...gently down the stream."

Doesn't get much worse than that.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/04/09 9:22pm

I have a friend who theorized that ST:V was brilliant because the 'Row your boat' song was supposed to imply it was all just a bad dream... If only...

I found all the buddy-buddy stuff highly over wrought. I don't like them outright saying the things that were so wonderfully implied in TOS

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/04/09 9:28pm

I have a CD with music from selected episodes of the first 3 series. I've had it for years, but I keep coming back to it for the music from The Inner Light. It's beautiful.

[Reply](#)

- [Deus Ex Macaroni](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/05/09 1:51am

Seems the episodes that seem to stick with people are the quieter, more emotional ones more than the swashbucklers; almost the opposite of the movies. Inner Light is my favorite TNG episode too, and TCOTEOF for the original series. For DS9, one that sticks out in my memory is an episode where Sisko goes Billy Pilgrim in some sort of accident and in the future his adult son-the underrated Tony Todd- has to rescue him. But he has to do this by dying-while Sisko is there and has to witness it. It works but Sisko is stuck with the memory of watching his own child die. Brutal.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/05/09 5:26am

I'd also nominate the eps showcasing MBarrett's star turns - in TNG when she's haunted by memories of her lost child and DS9's ep w/Odo. I hardly expected stiff ol' Nurse Chapel to have such talent. Classy lady.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/06/09 4:58pm

Holy shit, you're right. We forgot Locutus. Up there with WoK and CityontheEdge as one of the greatest Trek moments ever. I'll vote for it.

[Reply](#)

- [markovian with a sordid past](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

1/29/11 1:29am

There were some TNG eps that rank among the best of Star Trek, most often driven by Patrick Stewart's acting.

I think the best episode of Star Trek is TNG's "Darmok". The Enterprise meets some aliens that the Federation has contacted but no one has been able to communicate with yet. Therefore they view each other with suspicion. Basically the alien ship snatches Picard and traps him down on a planet's surface alone with the aliens' captain. Gradually Picard figures out the alien communicates in metaphors and his trapping himself down there with Picard where they have to work together to survive is the alien putting everything on the line in one final attempt to try to forge a peaceful link with the Federation.

I like it because it's Star Trek at its best: reaching out to try to forge a link with those that are different than us, exploring and meeting new people and hoping for a better future. TNG was pretty ridiculous but I thought this episode was fantastic.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Prole Hole

6/20/14 3:28pm

Agree pretty much all around. By the time I got to DS9 it seemed very kid stuff compared to the BSG reboot. Well, not kid stuff; how about teen stuff? Which is very much what TNG felt like compared to TOS. There are almost no painful endings, the interpersonal stuff is incredibly tame, and damn, other than Stewart and, from time to time, Burton, no one on the show is a particularly good actor.

[Reply](#)

- [Cookie\\_Monster](#)Prole Hole

2/27/15 3:59pm

Me going back over this review today, since Leonard Nimoy just died. And then me naturally got sucked into reading discussion. Ronald Moore was one of main writers on *DS9*, and he went on to create *BSG*. Me always saw *BSG* as his new-and-improved version of *DS9*. He was able to take all of same themes — loyalty, sacrifice, making impossible choices, enemy who look like us — but strip away sillier aspects of *Star Trek* and make much more dramatic series.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Cookie\_Monster

2/28/15 4:46am

In fact I completely agree. I love DS9, obviously, as I love all Star Trek, but BSG for me is exactly that - a non-PG version which can actually follow through on the premise all the way. In the same way that I think TNG and Voyager are much more logical points of comparison (and my contention that Voyager is feminist inversion of TNG), so I think DS9's best comparison is with BSG. FWIW, putting Doctor Who to one side because it's not a show I can be that objective about, BSG is for me the best science fiction show of at least the last twenty years.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:42pm

Thanks

A damned well written, highly personal critical piece. Wrath is a movie that gets so much attention that to say it's underrated comes off a bit silly. It is, besides being the best Trek film, one of the best war movies ever. Outside of the sci-fi setting, this is naval warfare in every way: the ships getting close to fire, just like old warships; the seafaring trappings, like the coats, or the "coming aboard" whistle. Meyer has said he used that sort of stuff as a way to make the series come back to life — to get away from the sterile settings of the first film (which is still a fantastic visual and audio experience, but does drag on and on...). It worked so well that they retrofitted every thing except the orig. series that way.

James Horner's score should also get a mention. As much as he has copied his own work into redundancy over the years, this time it works fantastically.

Thanks for this.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:47pm

The costume work was certainly underrated though - It wasn't even nominated for an academy award. Ghandi one best costume design that year, and while I don't doubt that Ghandi's costumes were well executed, they aren't nearly as memorable and iconic as the costumes introduced in TWoK (both the starfleet uniforms and the interstellar biker gang outfits).

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:49pm

Yeah, in addition to everything else, it is one of the best submarine movies ever made. Sticking them in that nebula, having them criss cross each other. That was some amazing shit.

And the initial approach "This is damn odd." I'm getting chills just thinking about it.

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilch](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:50pm

And Montalban is a force in the movie. Such a magnetic performance from him.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:51pm

On the costumes (sorry, I think I hit post there instead of cancel which means there might be an empty box above this). Those indeed were some great uniforms. I always hated that they went with the jumpsuits for all the shows.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:53pm

The costumes in the first Star Trek movie looked like pajamas and they were mostly grey, white, and powder blue. The were just one of the problems that movie had. The uniforms in this movie were snappy and dashing. Its no wonder the next 4 movies used them.

Ithink the red jackets are he best uiforms Starfleet livery ever issued. What do you guys think?

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:55pm

Wait a minute, hercules rockefeller, I refuse to honor those Starfleet costumes. The mock turtleneck thing was utterly ridiculous looking. The jackets were okay, and I won't really argue with the pants. But the quilted mock turtleneck just about ruins ALL the movies for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)blasmo

4/03/09 12:58pm

Horner's score is great. I forgot to mention, re: costumes—they stick Khan in a Starfleet uniform for about five minutes in "Space Seed," and it looks absolutely goddamn ridiculous.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)blasmo

4/03/09 1:03pm

But the turtleneck gives it style, and maintains the whole color-coding for different departments thing from the original series. having a jacket only would be too plain, which was the problem with the ones from TMP

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)blasmo

4/03/09 1:44pm

I accept the color coding thing, but NOT WITH QUILTED MOCK TURTLENECKS! Dear gods, has no-one any sense of style in this thread?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)blasmo

4/03/09 1:49pm

You're not gonna like my answer Reck, so I'll refrain from giving it. Sorry.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)blasmo

4/03/09 1:55pm

Okay, let me say this differently: Even with no sense of style, surely you all must recognize the lame-assedness of quilted mock turtlenecks? Mustn't you?

::gives up, goes shopping at Hot Topic::

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)blasmo

4/03/09 2:15pm

I would shop at Hot Topic, but only if there were more naked titties there.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)blasmo

4/03/09 2:21pm

I'm willing to concede the general douchieness of mock turtlenecks in general. But the uniforms were awesome (expecially the nice pull down where you could wipe your opponent's blood), and I won't accept criticism of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)blasmo

4/03/09 2:25pm

I'd shop for naked titties pretty much anywhere, actually . . .

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)blasmo

4/03/09 3:06pm

They look better than the unitards with the giant Space Buckles from the first movie. Khan dons a Starfleet jacket on the bridge of the Reliant, and looks a lot more menacing than he did in Space Seed.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)blasmo

4/03/09 3:52pm

I have no earthly clue what you just said, but I'll defend to my death your right to confuse me.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)blasmo

4/03/09 4:29pm

@blasmo: You are so right regarding Horner's score. Witness Krull.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)blasmo

4/03/09 5:57pm

The Hot Topic line was meant to be humorous, Juggernaut. I actually shop only at Neiman Marcus and Saks, duh.

(Okay, fine, Target and Old Navy.)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)blasmo

4/03/09 6:15pm

::swoon::

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)blasmo

4/03/09 9:16pm

Sorry, really ahte the uniforms, especially the turtlenecks, Hot Topic or no...

And what is the special substance that makes blood turn orange once it's on it?

That shit drove me nuts!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bScreaming Yellow Zonker Harris

6/20/14 4:43pm

People always neglect to mention quality.

Why is that?



[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [wookiee](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:53pm

We did it last week, but I don't care

Best lines:

"You've managed to kill just about everyone else, but like a bad marksman ... you... keep... missing... the target!"

Also, the best use of Moby Dick since the book (though I have to admit I probably like it better here than the book)

"From Hell's heart I stab at thee!"

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)wookiee

4/03/09 1:19pm

Leonard McCoy: Go? Where are we going?

James T. Kirk: Where they went.

Leonard McCoy: Suppose they went nowhere?

James T. Kirk: Then this will be your big chance to get away from it all.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)wookiee

4/03/09 1:26pm

"Tis a far far better thing I do than I have ever done...tis a far better resting place I go to than I have ever know"

McCoy: How do you feel?

Kirk: Young. I feel young.

Like Zack said, Shatner has never been better.

[Reply](#)

- [Animal Mother](#)wookiee

4/03/09 1:49pm

That's no plot hole, that's a nerd hole!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)wookiee

4/03/09 2:08pm

Presumably he read about the Klingons while he was in sickbay on the enterprise in SS. And also, I'm sure he did more reading as soon as he got up to the Reliant too.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)wookiee

4/03/09 2:24pm

I'd be willing to bet that, between us, we could do a thread that accurately reproduces, in its entirety, the entire Khan script. I've never seen a movie so many times as this one (including in the theater when I was 7 and the ear worms freaked me out for about a decade).

[Reply](#)

- [cybersybil](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:01pm

There are still a few evenings here and there where I wake up in a panic because my hair's tickling my ear but in my semi-lucid state I'm convinced it's a fuckin' Ceti eel. Come to think of it, even when I'm fully conscious, I feel something by my ear that's unexpected, that's the first place my mind goes. I should probably see a professional about this.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:24pm

OK, let's begin:

"In the 23rd century..."

[Reply](#)

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:29pm

This has always bothered me about Wrath of Khan ... why would they have mistaken Ceti Alpha V in the first place? Wouldn't the number indicate how far away the planet was from the sun? Would they have not noticed that Ceti Alpha V was, in fact, the fifth planet?

Or were they counting from the outside in?

Any space geeks want to clear this up for me? Thanks in advance.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:30pm

Saavik: Captain's log: Stardate 8130.3. Starship Enterprise on training mission to Gamma Hydra, section 14, coordinates 22-87-4. Approaching Neutral Zone; all systems normal and functioning.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:31pm

Cybersybil (aka "Boobs McGillicuddy"), if you need to see a professional, might I suggest Fred Garvin. As far as professionals go, he's top drawer, all the way.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)wookiee

4/03/09 3:38pm

"... Gamma Hydra, Sector One." I believe are the first spoken lines.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)wookiee

4/03/09 4:05pm

Ah, I should have refreshed sooner. Nice job, Hercules!

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)wookiee

4/03/09 4:08pm

And Gargantuan: that always has been a bit of a problem, but who knows what a planet exploding will do to the orbit of the other nearby planetary bodies.

There was one moment in Enterprise during the Xindi season, where Archer basically gets these weird brain parasites that cause him to lose his memory for long periods of time. He wakes up and finds out he failed the mission, and Earth

was destroyed. Humanity is almost on the verge of being wiped out, and they've settled on their new home: Ceti Alpha VI. As lame as that show could be, I loved that reference.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)wookiee

4/03/09 5:57pm

@gargantuan,

I think it's because the planets are all at different parts of their orbit, not lined up in a row. I'm not sure how far away their sensors work, but if it's a large solar system, but it's possible that they warped to the general area within the solar system where they expected the planet to be. Given that starfleet evidently hasn't been there in the last 15 years, they wouldn't be surprised if they didn't find it right where they thought it would be. Although, it is a bit of a coincidence that Ceti Alpha 5 happened to be in that general area at the time.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)wookiee

4/03/09 6:40pm

Yeah, I liked that reference in that alternate timeline Enterprise story, too. For the fansies, it just said that, after all the supposed struggle humanity goes through to preserve itself such that the remaining few have set themselves up on an out of the way planet, in a couple hundred years they're destined to be wiped out by a natural cataclysm anyway. What a burn!

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)wookiee

4/03/09 7:15pm

"Humanity is almost on the verge of being wiped out, and they've settled on their new home: Ceti Alpha VI. As lame as that show could be, I loved that reference. "

I remember that episode well, and I never caught that reference. Awesome. And whatever problems Enterprise had, one word redeems all: T'Pol.

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)wookiee

4/03/09 8:57pm

"Jim, you'd better get down here. You'd better...hurry."

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)wookiee

4/05/09 11:25am

Really? I think that the first thing you would do on a routine survey mission would be to check the current scans against your records. Not that you're necessarily expecting the count of planets to change, but you'd think that would show up pretty quickly!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:55pm

what helps sell Spock's death

Spock's death scene is so well-done that it would work no matter what, but what really puts it over the top is an earlier scene. When we learn how Kirk beat the Kobayashi Maru test, he immediately flips open his communicator and contacts Spock. Everyone's looking at him in amazement, and he says simply, "I hate to lose." As a kid (and, well, ever since), that line makes me swell. You want to jump up and shout, "Fuck yeah!" And because you're brought up to such

an emotional pitch at that moment—believing Kirk really IS capable of anything—the loss of Spock later is even more devastating, especially b/c of Shatner's brilliant acting and his realization that he isn't capable of saving his friend.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 12:57pm

Plus, not only is this one of my absolute favorite movies ever (saw it in theater when I was a kid), it's also my birthday. So, you know, this all worked out today.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 12:59pm

That's a really good point, guy (which is similar to Zack's, natch). Kirk has managed to wiggle out of ever dealing with ultimate consequences, and now he is confronted with his friend willingly making the ultimate sacrifice. I've always loved Spock so much more than Kirk, but it's the contrast that makes their characters so compelling.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 1:13pm

What I love about that scene, is how deftly the tone changes. We've had a bit of a lull in the action and some expostition, Kirk's taken a moment to relax and have a bite to eat, now it's time to get back to work. The Horner score kicks in - and you just know something bad ass is going to follow

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:02pm

Zack's otherwise great review missed the real autumnal feel of the film. In retrospect, its downplayed by the fact that we know there would be more sequels, but there's a real sense of aging and loss in The Wrath of Khan that can really hit you. Kirk is feeling old, and he's clearly dissatisfied with his life. The Enterprise, for that matter, is an obsolete ship, and when it encounters Khan, it's on a training mission that could be Kirk's last. Scotty's nephew dies . . . on and on. Spock's death caps off that mood. And the final sight of the crew looking at the Genesis planet feels awfully mournful — something new has been born, but Kirk's expressed feeling of youth sounds more wistful than sincere.

Science fiction confronts mortality more than most genres, but sci-fi films tend to emphasize action over ideas. The fact that Khan does both, and does them extraordinarily well, makes it appeal to me.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:23pm

This is a key, I think, to the movie. Whereas TMP takes place some 18 months after the original series' 5 year mission ended (yeah, i know too much about this stuff, so what, bite me), WoK took the wise step of actually aging the characters. I don't think the film would have been half as good as it is without that.

[Reply](#)

- [Dinoi](#) i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:53pm

This dramatic resonance reminds me of Generations, and how it tries but fails to recreate the effect. It's also about aging, and dying, and resisting the pain of change, like with Data's emotions and Soren saying "...time is the fire in which we all burn" right after Picard learns his brother and nephew died in a fire...

It tries and it should work, especially with such high production values and excellent actors but it just...keeps... missing...the target.

And don't get me started on Nemesis, which tries so hard to resonate with KHAN itself. Goddammit, the emotional impact of Spock's death was \*earned\*, not like that shitty self-sacrifice (SPOILERS?) of Data, taking away my favorite next-gen Trek character for...what? Nothing. Fuckers.

Fucking fuckers.

Now First Contact? Second-best Trek movie, no doubt, and an even better (dare I say?) MOBY DICK reference.

[Reply](#)

- [mmyi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 6:43pm

@ Dino: The LINE must be drawn HEAH!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpesi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 6:43pm

I never quite understood that. I thought everybody in Starfleet had to take the Kobayashi Maru test. Maybe Vulcans don't have to take it, because they're always going to send somebody to die or kill themselves, given that it would be the logical thing to do, so why bother?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Jamesi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 6:50pm

The whole last twenty minutes is so strong. How about the bit right before that, where Kirk first comes into the engine room and Scotty and McCoy have to hold him back.

MCoy: You'll flood the whole compartment!

Kirk: He'll Die!

Scotty: He's dead already

Not only was Shatner at his best, but I think the energy of him and Montalban helped elevate everyone else in the cast.

[Reply](#)

- [Meanderi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 7:17pm

"Scotty: He's dead already "

I remember a peice of my heart going NOOOOOOOOOO. Right. Then.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpesi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 7:45pm

Then, unfortunately, I can't help but notice the faceless crewman who has Kirk held back around the waist.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guyi](#) hate to be that guy

4/03/09 8:45pm

Well, except in the original series, you had the color-coded uniforms. Gold for command, blue for science and medicine, and red for engineering and security (and dying early). As science officer, Spock wasn't command, so maybe that's why he never took the Kobayashi Maru test.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Hornaceki](#) hate to be that guy

4/04/09 12:13pm

Nothing sells the passage of time when this movie starts more than the image of the Commodore PET computer in Shatner's quarters on Earth. Talk about antiques!

[Reply](#)

- [random passerby](#)i hate to be that guy

8/13/09 7:01pm

@Gentle - I liked the SPOILER reboot movie's solution to the question of why Spock never took the KM test: because he designed it. Of course it's a total retcon, but it does have the benefit of giving that line in WoK a slightly sharper edge.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)i hate to be that guy

7/14/10 11:34am

@random - I like your interpretation there. It's interesting to think that Spock's kinda had it in the back of his head all this time that he's been putting everyone else in that situation, but he's never been tested himself. So ever since the academy he's been carrying around a combination of logical curiosity and emotional self-doubt. It gives that line a nice resonance.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bScreaming Yellow Zonker Harris

6/20/14 3:39pm

The cast also seemed to hit that five year stretch where people really do start to look older, rather than that 30 to 50 range where fit people tend to hold steady. And makeup.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:12pm

Blood and Gore

"Wrath of Khan" is by far the bloodiest, goriest thing they've done in the Trek franchise. The bloody, burnt engineering ensigns; the scientists' corpses hanging from the ceiling; Khan's charred, fucked up face at the end of the movie; even the phaser effect when Terrell kills himself is just nasty. It really adds to the visceral impact of the movie.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 1:19pm

Rated PG

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:07pm

This movie — and The Temple of Doom — explain why there's a PG-13 rating.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:10pm

At the time there was no pg-13. today it might not be rated PG. I know when I was a kid both Khan and Scottie's nephew were pretty freaky (to say nothing of Spocks scarred face)

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:20pm

I know the ear eel thing really freaked me out when I was a kid.

[Reply](#)

- [Animal Mother](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:23pm

Yes, we know there was no PG-13 rating at the time. If you look all the way to one post above yours, it is pointed out that was partially responsible for the creation of the that limp-wristed poodle skirt wearing excuse for a rating.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:31pm

Yeah, it was specifically Temple of Doom that sparked the outrage that led to the creation of PG-13, as I recall. I don't remember WoK being mentioned in that context, though it's easy to see how it could have been.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:36pm

The worm burrowing into Chekov's ear was definitely the grossest squirmiest ooggiest thing I had seen in a movie at the time (till The Thing came out).

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:57pm

@animal

And, if you look at the time stamps of our posts, you'll see that Elusive's post predates min by a mere 3 min. In that light there exists two possibilities. 1: I'm a complete moron, or 2: I hadn't refreshed my screen in the 3 minutes prior to posting, a horrible crime for which I apologize profusely.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 3:05pm

Gremlins was also partly responsible for PG-13.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 7:05pm

what about "Conspiracy" from season 2 of TNG? i still can't believe they went as far as they did with the graphic violence in that one (not to mention the worm eating.)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 7:47pm

Yeah, I'm always surprised how graphic that phaser disintegration shot is whenever that ep is on. They sure never did that again.

X-Files had some pretty graphic alien autopsies on a regular basis.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 8:54pm

I'd like to point out that "Jaws" from seven years earlier had blood o'plenty, a severed foot, a severed head popping out of a boat's hull, and Quint being bitten in half right in front of your eyes - and was rated PG.

Go figure.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 9:51pm

I just saw the TNG conspiracy thing last week, and though the effects are cheesy, it's still a guy being blasted apart, meat and flesh flying off to reveal squirming bugs slowly disintegrated (whilst lots of other bugs slither around)... it's quite Grand Guignol, and I suspect the cartoony thing is why we don't think about it. Kahn seems more real, making you think of the people who got burnt, dtrung up, etc...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 9:57pm

Well, you are exaggerating just a tad. The head in the hull hole (heh) was never shown to be severed and we see Quint getting bitten in his middle but hardly "in half."

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 11:06pm

Tinsel -

Yeah, I admittedly might be exaggerating just a bit. But compared to "Temple of Doom" and the Chekov's ear scene, "Jaws" is a far sight more gruesome. I'm just making a comparison. Either the MPAA figured kids could handle a lot more back then, or they were completely out of their minds (personally, I had nightmares for weeks - but "Jaws" is still one of my favorite movies).

[Reply](#)

- [Evan Waters](#)Breakfast Balls

8/21/09 4:30pm

One of the producers of JAWS explains on the DVD that he helped secure the PG rating by explaining to the MPAA that nobody was going to go out and start eating beachgoers based on the movie.

It used to be there was even nudity in PG films- the rating was meant to be much broader.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [horsecow](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:21pm

"He tasks me ... he tasks me ...

But I shall have him!" There are a lot of great Moby Dick allusions in Wrath of Khan. One of my favorite parts of the movie is how they set up that Khan has been locked in a tiny room for years with only a few books to read, and his continuous reading of Moby Dick fed into his obsession with revenge on Kirk (if only they had given him some cheerful books about gardening to read instead)

Moby Dick quotes for those who are interested (can anyone think of others?):

"To the last, I will grapple with thee... From Hell's heart... I stab at thee. For hate's sake I spit my last breath... at thee." Ch. 135

"I'll chase him round Good Hope, and round the Horn, and round the Norway Maelstrom, and round perdition's flames before I give him up!" Ch. 36 [spacified by Khan in the movie]

"He tasks me..." Ch. 36

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)horsecow

4/03/09 1:30pm



Plus Meyer also did First Contact which had a great Moby Dick allusion delivered by Patrick Stewart.

"And he piled upon the whale's white hump, the sum of all the rage and hate felt by his whole race. If his chest had been a cannon, he would have shot his heart upon it. "

Even if it is misquoted, it is pretty powerful stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harrishorsecow](#)

4/03/09 1:43pm

Dumbledore, I don't recall Meyer being involved with First Contact, unless it was as an uncredited script doctor and I didn't hear about it. But you're right, the Moby Dick Reference there is both fitting and powerful.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissianhorsecow](#)

4/03/09 1:52pm

Your right. First Contact was directed by Riker. Meyer did Undiscovered Country. I was not thinking and I got two of the good even-numbered ones mistaken.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harrishorsecow](#)

4/03/09 2:15pm

Frakes is actually a pretty capable director. Ho got started by directing some of the more memorable TNG episodes ("The Offspring," "Reunion," "Cause and Effect"), a lot of TV work, and two of the TNG movies.

He also got saddled with "Clockstoppers" the live action version of "Thunderbirds" though, so there's that . . .

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractinghorsecow](#)

4/03/09 2:44pm

After being forced to read Bartleby in high school, I swore off Melville for good, so the MDick allusions all escaped me.

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilchohorsecow](#)

4/03/09 2:49pm

Frakes was on the verge of being a big-time director. Clockstoppers and Thunderbirds were both supposed to blow him up, but they fizzled.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harrishorsecow](#)

4/03/09 2:56pm

Tinsel, I read that as McDick for a second, and was wondering when the hell there was a McDonald's tie-in for the movie . . .

[Reply](#)

- [Dinohorsecow](#)

4/03/09 2:58pm

"Bartleby the Scrivener" is a great story. Shut up.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harrishorsecow](#)

4/03/09 3:05pm

Yeah. To be fair though, he can't be faulted for the lousy scripts he got handed. And in the case of clockstoppers at least, he did a creditable job with what he had to work with.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)horsecow

4/03/09 3:15pm

40 dense endless pages of noooooothing. Didn't help that I had to write a paper on it after.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)horsecow

4/03/09 10:06pm

Of course he can be blamed for the lousy scripts he got handed: Nobody puts a gun to your head. You can say no if you think it will suck.

Trust me, directing is too difficult. You've got to get up every day and will the project into existence, imbue your cast and crew with confidence....Nobody goes into a project thinking they're going to make a piece of shit...

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harrish](#)horsecow

4/04/09 9:02am

Richelieu Jr., you're right. It would have been more accurate for me to say that even though he accepted those scripts to direct he didn't write them, to there's that . . .

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)horsecow

4/04/09 4:19pm

It's interesting that three of the best Trek stories are Moby Dick remakes: The Doomsday Machine, Wrath of Khan, and First Contact. Of course, then there's Obsession, which didn't work out so well.

One of the aspects that makes Wrath of Khan so interesting is that it's Moby Dick... from the WHALE's perspective!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)El Zilcho

6/20/14 3:09pm

This cannot be true. Frakes did nothing interesting behind the camera. The man was a plodder.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Jack Strawb

7/10/14 1:15pm

I thought Frakes did a nice job with First Contact. I enjoyed it.

He's gone on to have an active career as a TV director. Still working.

[Reply](#)

- [Tubalcaine](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

2/20/20 3:28pm

Was Meyer a writer on First Contact? He was not the director. That was Frakes. A quick check online shows no credit of Nicholas Meyer on First Contact.

EDIT: Never mind. Asked and answered years ago!

[Reply](#)

- [Tubalcaine](#)Tubalcaine

2/20/20 3:30pm

Never mind. I see this was asked and answered years ago.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 2:00pm

Before we're utterly subsumed in our collective geekgasm...

... can we also note that Kirk's ex and especially his son were really awful? Like beyond lousy awful?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 2:09pm

Yeah, that felt a little bit like fan fiction territory. But I will say this for the Klingons - they sure know who to gut.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 2:26pm

They were pretty bad, and the white sweater around the shoulders look was never anything but douchy. Still, they were so outweighed by all the awesome that, beyond a couple of moments, I never really notice how bad they are.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 2:37pm

Eh, I thought they were OK. Carol Marcus is just bland; David Marcus is petulant — but one could say he's usually onscreen with a father who appears to have abandoned him, so it's understandable.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 6:00pm

Petulant only begins to describe the bratty blandness that seethes from David's pores, Elusive Robert Denby. And how could Kirk have been into Carol? They have no chemistry — there's no banter, no meaningful looks, no over-long 'inadvertent' touches... Feh. Boring-ass Federation scientists.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 8:19pm

Judging from Kirk's horndog cred, I don't think "compatibility" was high on his list of standards. :-)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/03/09 10:26pm

I was so glad when the kid got killed in III, some folks in the cinema even cheered..

Earlier I said I thought he was played by Jack Lemmon's kid, but I'm starting to think I blew my mouth off a bit too soon...

If that's the case, my apologies to Chris Lemmon who I hear is a great guy and who i've always held a grudge against for these films (and that damned sweater!)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/04/09 9:05am

Yeah, young Dr. Marcus was played by the unfortunately named Merritt Buttrick, who I think was on "Square Pegs" ...

[Reply](#)

- [Happy Go Lucky](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/04/09 9:48am

Didn't he die of AIDS a few years after TWOK?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/05/09 10:11am

...And Joachim was his nemesis!

I always liked Joachim in TWoK, I thinkg it's cool they throwed him a bone with that appearance in TNG

[Reply](#)

- [Happy Go Lucky](#)Schoolhouse Reck

4/05/09 10:16pm

The actor who played Joachim showed up on an episode of The X Files in it's eighth year and I have to say even twenty years after TWOK he still hadn't aged much.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Schoolhouse Reck

6/20/14 2:19pm

The actress playing his wife was tolerable, and did a respectable job. His son, though? That just didn't work.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

6/20/14 2:22pm

Not to get TOO into this, but it's perfectly clear from the movie that Carol decided not to tell her son that he had a starship captain for a father. Nice, huh?

I'm trying to imagine one kid, anywhere, who would not have wanted to know that.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Jack Strawb

6/23/14 1:51pm

1) I agree.

2) I think it's awesome I'm getting a reply to a comment left five years ago. :)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:23pm

the past

In addition to everything else, the movie is also a one big metaphor about how the past can catch up to you (or in this case Kirk). He went around for years in his youth gallivanting around the universe, as a few characters point out, including Kirk, implicitly, when he says that the new crew of the Enterprise should be young. And as we've seen in the series, he'll insert himself into any conflict or situation to make it fit how he thinks it should really be.

Now his past has come back to haunt him in the form of his past love, his mortal enemy, and the son who doesn't know him and wants to kill him, Oedipus-style. That there is one hell of a mid-life crisis. And of course the consequences of all his past actions are threatening to kill the people he holds dearest. Even Scotty's nephew, a complete innocent, dies b/c of who Kirk is. The movie naturally ends up supporting Kirk and bearing him out, but throughout most of its length,

it acts as an interesting critique of the younger Kirk from the series, pointing out how his considerable strengths are also some pretty deep flaws.

Geez. I never realized how Greek tragedy-ish the Wrath of Khan was.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:15pm

@hate - I hadn't thought about it that way - that's a really good point. one thing I didn't like about SS is that the ending is a cop-out. Sure, it's a neat sci-fi idea to wonder what would happen if you give a megalomaniacal superman his own planet, but without the technology to harm anyone else. Sort of a planet-sized petrie dish for a political science experiment. But it's also extremely irresponsible and out of character for Kirk to do so. Khan just stole Kirk's beloved Enterprise from him, and Kirk rewards Khan for doing so? As much as Kirk likes to be a freelancer, this is a bit of a stretch

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:23pm

And I never realized how dangerous it would be to put law enforcement in the hands of a robot instead of including that crucial human touch that allows for a more nuanced enforcement of the law. Thanks Robocop!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 2:53pm

I really wouldn't call abandoning someone on a near-uninhabitable planet, for all time, a reward - regardless of one's mad skills.

And maybe call II schlocky if you must (I wouldn't) but it was anything but low-budget. People may be numbed to CGI nowadays and expect to be wowed at every new movie, but the simulation of the Genesis planet blooming was JAW DROPPING, esp with nothing but Tron to compare it to (no small shakes there either).

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 3:07pm

As I recall they used a sizable chunk of the FX budget on that sequence, and made up for it by recycling footage from TMP wherever they could.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 3:18pm

@tinsel - to Khan, it was a reward, in a sense. He'd have an entire planet to himself with which to test his superior intellect. certainly beats imprisonment, which is what he should've gotten.

Really, there's no way Space Seed deserves a "A", at least not on it's own merits. Being the prequel to TWOK does add some appeal, but other than that and the presence of Ricardo Montalban, it doesn't have that much going for it. The plot revolves on an incredibly dated, female stock character (who just happens to have a fetish for centuries-old dictators!) She's such a weak character, she can't decide who's side she's on, and that's the only thing that save's Kirk's ass. And the ending is a cop out. Kirk let's Khan off the hook, out of respect for Khan's impressive credentials as a dictator? And he allows Lt McGivers to defect with Khan instead of prosecuting her for treason?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 3:32pm

Yes, hr, but the planet was otherwise barren. Seemed like he'd be more bored than anything. And propagating new minions to dominate and control takes time. Though I'll grant you that imprisonment would be much more torturous for him. I always got the sense that Starfleet didn't trust him anywhere near them, figuring he'd manage a way to escape or ruin everyone's day eventually.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 3:38pm

TOS never got a good handle on female characters. That was a symptom of the '60s in general. With some notable exceptions (Edith Keillor of course, and the blind ambassador from the Medusa ep), they were usually dim-witted hotties in coconut shell bras or screaming harridans - e.g., Elan of Troyus and the Turnabout Intruder chick.

[Reply](#)

- [Follower](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 4:13pm

Bonus: The Genesis planet creation simulation sequence was the first publicly-released product of LucasFilm's fledgeling CGI unit — later to be sold to Steve Jobs and renamed "Pixar."

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)i hate to be that guy

4/03/09 8:04pm

Thanks, TJ,B. I don't re-watch the eps before coming here, so I forgot that it wasn't a wasteland originally. Likewise to herk rock.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bI Find Tinsel Distracting

6/20/14 3:05pm

Actually, no.

The women Kirk had serious relationships with were all around his age, and iirc presented as competent professionals. (I know this only due to rewatching the series last year for the first time in decades.) There was a high powered lawyer, a scientist, Ruth from Shore Leave did something or other impressive. Elaan of Troyus was actually a pretty interesting character. I have nothing to offer regarding the wacko from TI, however.

And like any good navy or air force guy, when presented with the opportunity for a bit of mutual enjoyment, he took it. Did you want him to shag some ugly women for some reason, or not enjoy casual sex from time to time?

I'm half serious. We'd applaud Janeway if once or twice a season she found someone to hop into bed with. Why don't we find acceptable comparable behavior in men?

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bhercules rockefeller

6/20/14 3:07pm

Hardly. She's not a weak character, she's an accomplished, professional woman who happens to have a weak moment. Big difference.

But, yeah, cutting Khan loose to found his own empire smacks of hubris. Which smacked back.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [AnglScarlett](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 6:14pm

Roddenberry & women

"But given the weight her character is given, it's too bad that Marla wasn't stronger."

Roddenberry was in my opinion, a sexist. You could say he was a victim of his time, but here was a man who projected hundreds of years into the future and could imagine almost anything - except for a strong woman. Or, a woman Starship Captain. In Turnabout Intruder, an episode I try very hard to block out, it's stated as fact that a woman cannot hope to become Captain, hundreds of years into the future. And now, only 40 years into that future, the very idea is absurd.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)AnglScarlett

4/03/09 10:39pm

I read a bio of Roddenberry, which gave me the surprising impression that, among other things, he was the inspiration for the Kevin Spacey character in LA Confidential... At any rate he was the LAPD liaison for Dragnet while he was a cop and that's how he got into writing, then producing for TV...

The guy's an idol of line, but he does come off as quite a man of his time, to put it politely. Cocktail parties, pinched on the rump, lots of affairs but his wife had to toe the line, etc..

Apparently at the end he repented a bit, but I think the sexism charge has to stick. It was his universe, he fought for plenty of things, but not that (at least until TNG, when he's heard a lot of feedback on the subject)...

Anyways, who says women should be Captains? What if they're on their periods?

(ps: what happened to the TNG guys in skirts?

I thought that was pretty funny, actually.

Things had progressed to the point where cross-dressing was allowed...

Probably because Obama got elected...)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)AnglScarlett

4/04/09 1:42am

Rod was a visionary in terms of his ideas for a Utopian society and ST is a great demonstration of the need for interracial equity, but his take on feminism was definitely uneven. Yes, MBarrett played No 2 in The Cage and there are some higher ranking women officers (virtually all the admirals in TNG seem to be women), but so many women in TOS are just sex on legs (not that there's anything wrong with that).

The most bizarre artifact from Roddenberry is a film he produced for Roger Vadim called Pretty Maids All in a Row. It's a high school sex/mystery about a serial killer. Every girl in it looks straight out of Playboy and drops their dresses in an instant. Guidance counselors have sex w/students in classrooms, Rock Hudson essentially pimps out Angie Dickenson to a teenage boy, etc. It's as much a product of the early 70s as Rod's sensibilities, but still a very very weird experience. Doohan even has a small role in it sans accent!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)AnglScarlett

4/04/09 6:22am

Rod Serling > Gene Roddenberry

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)AnglScarlett

4/04/09 8:59am

I loved 'Pretty Maids when I was a kid, but what teenage boy wouldn't...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)AnglScarlett

4/04/09 4:47pm

Yes, Roddenberry initially cast Majel Barret as the first officer... but she had to be cold and unemotional, because what other kind of woman could be second in command?

Things were much better in TNG, though he still managed to put Marina Sirtis' breasts front and center. Not that subsequent, Roddenberry-free editions of Trek avoided that move. It wasn't until the current decade that we got believable gender-equity in SF TV.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)AnglScarlett

4/05/09 3:59pm

7of9 puts em all to shame, even rivaling Natalie Wood's torpedoes in Rebel w/out a Cause.

But I condone any gratuitous chestiness as long as it's equal opportunity. :-)

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)alurin

6/20/14 2:14pm

And you know all this from a single episode? Your mindreading abilities fascinate me. Do go on.

How were things 'much better in TNG'? You have a touchy-feelie therapist and a pediatrician. The boys still get to do all the fun stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

6/20/14 2:15pm

"but so many women in TOS are just sex on legs (not that there's anything wrong with that)."

Sure, and so many are accomplished professionals. I'm also trying to think of male guest stars who weren't chosen for their looks. Not too many.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Jack Straw

6/23/14 9:27am

Shelby, Ro, Lefler... there were plenty of women who were just as competent as the men, without being neutered. They just weren't in the main cast. I said better, not perfect.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:27pm

Best Acting of the Series

All of the actors really stepped up their game for "Wrath of Khan". James Doohan was heartbreaking, Walter Koenig has a great freak-out, Paul Winfield is awesome as usual and even Kirstie Alley gives a moving performance. But the glue that holds them all together is Ricardo Montalban. The scene where he interrogates Chekov and Terrell in the wreckage of the Botany Bay is just brilliant. It's my favorite scene in the movie.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 1:34pm

It's such a ridiculous, over-the-top role in so many ways, though, it's a testament to Montalban that he completely sold it. How many other actors would have failed miserably delivering some of those lines?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 2:30pm



Don't you think some of it plays because Khan is supposed to be the smartest, most fit person from Earth? To be that- and have everyone know it- has to make you arrogant like nobody's business. What would be seen as overacting for a standard villian character works here because of course Khan would be over the top.

Plus Ricardo kicked ass. Christ, I would have bought a Cordoba from the guy if I had a driver's license in 1979.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 3:21pm

Don't forget Khan is the result of decades of focused genetic engineering, specifically to breed a warrior. In addition to superior strength, intelligence and endurance, they would also have bred him with increased aggressiveness and self-assuredness (as opposed to the Bene Gesserit who had many of the same qualities and talents, but with more humility and loyalty added than self-determination).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 4:02pm

Christ, Tinsel, you're like another me over there.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 6:34pm

I like all of Montalban's stories on the DVD, about how you barely realize that he and Kirk never share the same set, it's all just talking over the viewscreen and such but they still make it work, despite the fact that he delivered all his lines to some 20-year-old stage hand standing in for Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

4/03/09 10:09pm

But if I'm over here, jbmnd, that means you must be... Oh, oh!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/20/14 2:55pm

That's certainly how I feel.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bi hate to be that guy

6/20/14 2:58pm

The chances of that role going wrong and II being the last of the ST films has to be huge. Amazing that he pulled it off. Imagine other actors with his modest pedigree making good the way Montalban. He was also 62 years old and well into the eight year run of the ridiculous Fantasy Island.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Thomas](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:49pm

Movies Zack watches over and over...

"Ghostbusters, Raiders Of The Lost Ark, Alien, Blade Runner, Die Hard, Salo—"

Dark, man. Dark.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Thomas

4/03/09 1:00pm

Isn't Salo the poop-eating sex slave movie? Is it ever shown on tv enough for you to stop what you are doing to watch it? And if it is, I just don't get why anyone would want to.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Thomas

4/03/09 1:06pm

Yeah I have to beg to differ here. I can never watch Salo when I come across it flipping channels; the TV edit doesn't work for me at all.

[Reply](#)

- [Lovemydog](#)Thomas

4/03/09 1:18pm

I imagine the Tv edit of Salo is the opening credits followed immediately by the closing credits.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Thomas

4/03/09 1:51pm

With a commercial for "Bob's Big Boy" in between.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Thomas

4/03/09 2:22pm

Maybe the silver platter heaped with poop would fly, but definitely not the eating. Cutting off the tongue though, didn't they do that on Cosby?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Thomas

4/03/09 2:29pm

Yeah, but only because Malcolm-Jamal Warner stipulated it in his third-season contract.

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)Thomas

4/03/09 2:48pm

In other words, yes Zack, we caught your joke. Touche.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Captain January](#)Zack Handlen

4/04/09 6:02am

Star Trek - The Motion Pictures, Give them Some Credit

A terrific approach and summation of both the episode and the film it inspired, Mr. Handlen. Thanks for this. It made my day. I could go into it at length but I won't as I'm posting late, except to say that the themes of aging, time catching up with all of us, and a new generation emerging to take our places makes this movie, for all its apparent clunky simplicity, a multi-layered piece of pop art.

Too many comments here for me to grapple with (and I have to assume the anti IV vibe is due to the AV Club's hipster mentality; it's a beautifully made and sincere film with a universal sense of humor —I got to see it when it first came out with a bunch of Russians who loved it — and an actual sociological sense of itself (all right, WOK is a better movie and I love politics of The Undiscovered Country and the vision of The Motion Picture) and it actually had an impact on the nonsense that is the whaling industry in several countries.

I do like how an earlier post-er related Khan's quoting of Melville to Kirk's "saving the whales"; it's a nice symmetry.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Captain January

4/04/09 4:56pm

I would like to see evidence that ST IV affected the whaling industry.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Captain January

4/04/09 9:05pm

The very small contingent of Star-Trek-fan whaling captains increased their catches from 1987 through 1989 in an irrational response to their hatred of the film.

I liked "The Voyage Home". It was nice to have a light-hearted flick after the heavy stuff of the first three. Reminded me of the stupid but fun episodes like "A Piece of the Action" and "The Squire of Gothos".

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Captain January

4/04/09 9:50pm

Russia instituted a ban on whaling shortly after the release of the film. I don't know if it was directly related to the movie but Nimoy and producer Harve Bennett were invited by the World Wildlife Fund to Moscow for a special screening of the movie in 1987 to celebrate the ban.

And I certainly remember the time of the release of IV — it was a genuine hit and minor pop culture phenomenon for a few months in a way none of the other movies have been. The combination of its quick wit (look at it again — Nick Meyer wrote most of the fish-out-of-water middle of the film and brought a lot of keen, if obvious, social humor) and ecological commentary struck a real chord.

[Reply](#)

- [Monocleman](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 3:45pm

This movie...

is just incredible. My brother, who, like I, was named after characters from Trek (his first two names are James Kirk, mine are Scott Montgomery), based his life around the conversation that ends with "I don't like to lose." He got Kirk's unfailing faith in himself I got Scotty's willingness to fight over just certain things. (Although I sometimes wish I'd been named after McCoy. At least I'm not names Spock.

It was the first movie I saw in the theatre, it's the movie we watch on my brother's birthday, it's just wonderful. I've seen it a lot of times, and it's just fantastic.

I'm listening to the soundtrack right now, and it, like everything else about this movie, is just wonderful.

Man, I like this movie. Thanks for putting up such a smart and good post on it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Monocleman

4/03/09 4:08pm

I'd call you a geek for having the soundtrack on hand...

But a compilation of music from the first 6 movies was one of my favorite CD's well into adolescence. In fact, if it weren't out of geeky embarrassment I'd probably be blasting some star trek out of my honda fit as I leave work today - not a bad way to tie up the work week.

[Reply](#)

- [Monocleman](#)Monocleman

4/03/09 4:22pm

it's just on my laptop at work. (Yay for private office space.)

And really, I'm named after Captain Montgomery Scott, and I'm going off to play d&d in Hyde Park tonight. There's really no hiding my nerdiness, I'm just going to enjoy it and have my Kuo-toan psycher fight Dark Gods tonight.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Monocleman

4/03/09 10:30pm

My first names are Nurse Chapel...

Seriously though, I've been writing a lot lately to the soundtrack for TOS and it's really brilliant!

Even the short musical cues and stings are very dramatic, and it's amazingly fluid:

From romance, to danger, to humour and back... Truly great stuff and very underestimated...

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:57pm

Wrath of Khan 25+ Years Later

It's weird how "Wrath of Khan" has aged so well. At the time, it felt like a definite rebound compared to the dreary, dreadful Star Trek: The Motion Picture. (Which, now that I think about it, announced that self-seriousness that Zack talks about just from the title.)

But it didn't feel like the revelation that it has become. At the time, it felt more like an extended version of a great, great TOS episode. But it really has grown into something else: a Sci-Fi movie classic, and the one thing that people who are dubious about Trek in the first place can enjoy in and of itself.

It's almost a gateway to Star Trek geekery. (Even though it's a sequel.)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

4/03/09 2:26pm

Hey Jim-

I sent the AV Club an email suggesting the exact same thing about a month ago! Everything you need to know about Star Trek you can get from this movie.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)barefoot jim

4/03/09 2:31pm

That was exactly what made the movie such a revelation. It seems so obvious, but when making TMP, the suits at the studio missed what made TOS so much fun. Being on a big screen didn't mean having to up the pomposity and import. "Khan" is exactly like a TOS episode, right down to the continued storyline, and succeeds because of that, not in spite of it.

[Reply](#)

- [Deus Ex Macaroni](#)barefoot jim

4/05/09 1:25am

One of the biggest problems with ST:TMP was that is WAS an episode of the original show; they just rehashed Nomad into Vger and streeetched it out way too long. Apparently that plotline was one of Gene Roddenberry's pet themes, it showed up a lot: Enterprise finds some sort of god-like being and it turns out to be either a child or insane in some way. At least Khan continued the episode it was built on.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#) Deus Ex Macaroni

6/20/14 3:34pm

Yup, I recall some general disappointment with the plot, the feeling that it was, well, stale. A reworking that wasn't really all that interesting.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#) Zack Handlen

4/03/09 4:24pm

The Motion Picture's box-office was NOT mediocre

Adjusted for inflation, it remains the most financially successful Trek film to date—more so even than the very popular (and very shitty) Voyage Home. It's also my personal favorite, though I love Khan as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Lord Running Clam

4/03/09 10:32pm

This is true, but it was also by far the most expensive of the films (though they squeezed every nickel out of it later: music, stock shots, etc...)

[Reply](#)

- [Arashi Miyazawa](#) Lord Running Clam

9/19/16 3:03pm

This isn't accurate. Adjusted for inflation it took in a higher gross at the box office than any of the TOS-TNG movies, but it also had an absolutely ludicrous budget that made it less profitable than its smaller box office sequels.

Going by just the box office and reported production budget numbers, TMP had a 135% domestic profit margin. That puts it as only the fifth most profitable Star Trek movie domestically (4th worldwide). That's literally the middle of the pack, and thus the very definition of mediocre.

Wrath of Khan is #1 with a 615% domestic profit margin.

Search for Spock is #2 with a 300% domestic profit margin.

Voyage Home is #3 with 172% domestic profit margin.

TMP has big impressive looking numbers up front, but that's mostly negated by expenses that are just as big and impressive looking, not to mention that this is only going by reported production budgets. The marketing budget is unreported and supposedly equally ludicrous.

In the end they were expecting Star Wars numbers and instead they got merely profitable. Good enough for a low-budget sequel to get their money's worth out of all the sets and costumes made for TMP, but not good enough to trust the existing production team with it. Mediocre.

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#) Zack Handlen

4/04/09 12:28pm

Kirk's solution to the Kobayashi Maru

It's not cannon (and yes, I'm proving I'm a Trekker for knowing this), but I love Kirk's solution to the Kobayashi Maru as shown in a Star Trek comic (don't ask me which one).

When he meets the Klingons, he identifies himself as James T. Kirk, and the Klingon captains gasps, having heard of Kirk and being afraid of his reputation, quickly backs down.

Of course, the instructor quickly comes in saying "what the hell is going on?" and Kirk admits that he snuck in the night before and reprogrammed the computer.

I \*think\* Peter David may have written that issue.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Hornacek

4/04/09 1:57pm

Oh, that is funny! Would have been great if he programmed the Klingons to run shrieking away from him flapping their arms like little girls at the mention of his name. Good one.

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Hornacek

4/04/09 10:45pm

I don't know which came first - that novel or the comic book. And while I know nothing about Julia Ecklar, it seems like classic Peter David. That man can write anything.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:58pm

Props on to've!

One of my favorite non-standard contractions.

Also enjoy y'all (as if y'all didn't guess that, assuming anyone gives a shit that I constantly refer to my Texicanicity) and what'll.

Now what'll you do about it?

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino

4/03/09 2:21pm

Okay, I've read the whole thing and I'd like to say first, in all seriousness, that this is a terrific piece.

Zack: I've liked your voice since you first came here, and I'm starting to like it more with each article. I think I enjoy reading critical pieces most when I have three things, the first being a subject of interest and familiarity to me, the second being language constructs that are new and interesting, and the third being insights that are new and interesting, and I feel like I get a lot of all of that from your stuff here. And, one more unsolicited, amateur, opinionated bit of advice—writing makes a writer better, and your "write[ing] a lot" (if you people aren't following on Titter, you're missing out) is really showing.

About the items under review, I could also go on and on. In fact, it reminds me of a daydream I have—becoming the A.V. Classic reviewer for the Simpsons (I bet I could make it through Season 8, at least); there would never be enough space to express all of the cultural and personal relevance and resonance that these things have for me. Under those conditions, actually, I think you showed restraint. And I'll try to do the same.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bDino

6/20/14 2:28pm

Interesting, as I had all but given up on Zack as a reviewer for reasons I spell out elsewhere, but here he's top-notch, entirely—I'm sure—because he's speaking directly and without irony or cuteness regarding his emotional response to the film. He also talks intelligently about the film's technical aspects (as usual) but this time around those notes are woven into his emotional response instead of seeming like desperate attempts to make language simulate popping popcorn.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 9:06pm

Son of Kirk

S I recall, Kirk's kid was Jack Lemmon's son, Chris...

He was at CalArts just before me, but I never knew him...

I thought he seemed a bit the sweater across the shoulders hand-wringing yuppie-type in these films and hated him for it, though I'm told he's a good guy...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

4/04/09 10:03pm

Yeah, I finally figured out I was all wrong on that from these comments.. I wonder where I got that from?

Anyways, I hated Buttrick in this film, but I'm still sorry he died...

[Reply](#)

- [MOster](#)Zack Handlen

4/04/09 12:07pm

Bagpipes

The first time I cried during a movie was during the eulogy. I was like 12 years old, and after three bars of the bagpipes I just lost it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)MOster

4/05/09 10:20am

My brother and I were so upset that my dad had to promise that we could go out and rent TSfS the next week - we were too young to watch them in the theaters and we didn't know that there was already a movie where he comes back to life.

[Reply](#)

- [Vladimir Pootin](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:59pm

One of these things is not like the other

"...it belongs in that rare category of things I never get tired of watching. Ghostbusters, Raiders Of The Lost Ark, Alien, Blade Runner, Die Hard, Salo"

Salo - The 120 Days of Sodom?

Geez Handlen, I think I may have just found out a little too much about you.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Vladimir Pootin

6/20/14 2:23pm

Yeah, I did spot that, and assumed it was Zack being cutesy again. But who knows.

[Reply](#)

- [Flyboy](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 5:37pm

Top Geek

anyone like me geeky enough to read The Eugenics Wars books by Greg Cox? Some may dismiss this sort of thing as glorified fan fic, but I enjoy how he interweaves almost every time travel plot point into a plausible back story.

It also fulfills my wish that Gary Seven's backdoor pilot had actually been picked up.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Flyboy

4/03/09 10:33pm

Picking up 'backdoor pilots' is a whole 'nother kind of fiction, sweetheart...

[Reply](#)

- [ChrisHunt](#)Zack Handlen

5/16/12 8:44am

Re: Space Seed, how do you get a gig as ship's historian on a deep space exploration mission? Sailing around the universe with nothing to do all day but paint pictures of your favourite dictators. Shame that when - against all reasonable expectation - something happens where her skills could come in useful, she screws up so royally.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bChrisHunt

6/20/14 1:46pm

I took it to mean that was her specialty, not her only area of interest.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 12:49pm

Khan's followers

Apparently they were all Chippendales dancers. Ceti Alpha V was apparently one of their more remote outposts, but I'm guessing with Khan's wife gone, he had to find something to distract him.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)King Bastard

4/03/09 9:22pm

Hot Cops!

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Zack Handlen

4/04/09 9:35pm

Thought Maybe This Would be the Time

I've been watching all of the episodes before reading these reviews each week. I've seen most (if not all of them), but only once or twice. I grew up on TNG and didn't really watch TOS until pretty recently. It's been a lot of fun, and in keeping with that I watched Wrath of Khan this week too. I've seen all of the movies (except V which I think I've only seen once or twice) many times, and WoK more even than the others, but I hadn't watched it in a while. When it came to the end and Spock's death had come and gone and I hadn't teared up yet, I thought maybe this would be the first time I ever watched the movie without doing so. But then Kirk got to the line about "death in the shadow of new life." That was the end of me. I've recently experienced both the death of a good friend and the birth of my first son. Throughout all of it, this movie was on my mind a lot.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 1:41pm

Remember. . .

I love the Kirk getting choked up at Spock's memorial service; for my money it's the high point of all of Trek. But let's not forget the third leg in the great Trek friendship triangle: the Spock/McCoy relationship. The confrontation right before Spock enters the radiation chamber is the perfect way for him to say goodbye to McCoy: one last debate, a little reference to all the past teasing ("As you are so fond of pointing out, Doctor. . .") and Spock making it clear that he KNOWS he could win this argument by pure reason, he just doesn't have the time. But underneath it all, the knowledge that it goes beyond pure reason, he's doing this out of love, for McCoy as much as Kirk or anyone. All this depth and weight, wrapping up in a line I love at least as much as any other in the movie: "I'm sorry, Doctor, I have no time to discuss this logically."



[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Zack Handlen

4/04/09 12:23pm

No love for Judson Scott?

I liked him as Khan's second-in-command - he's smart enough to say "hey, we have this ship and our freedom and Genesis, let's quit while we're ahead." Too bad Khan doesn't listen to him ("... yours ... is the superior ... intellect ...")

But my question is: if you're co-starring in a film based on a cult-tv show with a rabid fan base, why in the world would you demand higher-billing? He ended up with his name not listed in the cast at all!

Worst ... career ... move ... ever? (well, in the field of Star Trek maybe)

[Reply](#)

- [Carl](#)Zack Handlen

10/07/16 10:41am

The article says that it's a strange coincidence that Khan's chamber happens to activate first. It is not. Just watching the show you hear them say that the leader's chamber usually activated first in order for him to determine whether the conditions warranted revival of the others. Watch the show; then critique.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 1:46pm

Zack—this is a rare review of yours that isn't hopelessly saturated with oh-so-hip, pomo stylings, probably because you have actual, strong feelings about the proceedings.

There's a lesson in there. Cheers.

[Reply](#)

- [gusano cerebro](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 2:04pm

I have never seen this movie

What the fuck is wrong with me? I've seen every Trek movie except the first two (yes, even Nemesis). I'm putting this at the top of my Netflix queue now.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

4/03/09 8:58pm

Quel Salo....

So, I'd love to hear what your 'pavlovian response' is to Salo!

And what lines exactly to replay over and over in your head?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "This Side Of Paradise" / "The Devil In The Dark"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published April 10, 2009

[Comments \(86\)](#)



We've seen Spock dead; we've seen him sick and struggling against his emotions; we've seen him make mistakes; but this may be a first. This week—we see Spock *smile*. Not smirk, not half-grin, not appear bemused. The sonofabitch flat out, nothing held back, maybe five degrees split from actual hilarity, smiles. It's something of a shock.

We've talked before about Kirk's passion for blowing up societies that don't agree with him, and, of what we've seen so far, this week's "This Side Of Paradise" presents that passion in its starkest terms. It's an intriguingly ambiguous episode, for all the theatrics and occasional silliness; Spock isn't the only one to find satisfaction on Omicron Ceti III, but his emergent joy of life is the most symbolic both of what the planet offers to everyone on board the Enterprise, and what it ultimately takes away. That smile of his—it's shocking because smiling just isn't Spock's way. It never has been. Can an effect that so thoroughly distorts his personality be said to be a positive one? But then, if that effect leaves him content, how could it be anything but?

150 men, women, and children settled on Omicron four years ago. (Weird how you don't see any kids bopping around the planet surface. The issue's never raised, but seeing as it hasn't been *that* long, wouldn't you expect at least a few teenagers? It could be an oversight, but I like to think of it's something more sinister; the plant spores that make everybody so darn happy, and protect them from the deadly rays that destroy all animal matter, well, maybe those spores don't really work for kids. Maybe each and every living adult still on Omicron watched their children die; only they were so delighted by everything that it never occurred to them to care. I guess that would make Kirk's fight against the spore-heads a bit more black-and-white.) Sorry, got lost in the parenthetical. Settlers, planet, Enterprise comes to check things out—right, here we are. The place is constantly being bombarded by deadly energy called "berthold rays," which seem to guarantee that there'd be no survivors left of the original colony. Not really sure about the line of thought here for the initial colonization—Kirk implies that Elias Sandoval, head of the settlers, knew about the possibility of rays, but decided to take his (and their) chances anyway. But nobody's heard back from Sandoval or his group in a while, and the assumption is, everybody's toast.

The rays don't immediately kill you—takes about a week for the effect to set in—so it's safe enough for Kirk, McCoy,

Spock, Sulu, and a couple random guys to beam down. They see white picket fences, houses, barns; and just as someone mentions how all the people must be dead, a group of men in green-gray overalls shows up. Their leader identifies himself as Sandoval, and while McCoy has to give everyone a full physical, the truth seems obvious; the colonists are alive and well, berthold rays be damned.

Of course, something must be up. McCoy senses it when, after doing a check-up on Sandoval, he finds that the man is actually *too* healthy; he's missing scar tissue on his lungs from an early surgery. It's Spock who discovers the cause, courtesy of his long-lost love, Leila. (I love the awkwardness of Spock having a romantic past; with Kirk, we expect broken hearts strewn across the galaxy, but it's a surprise to find out that Spock had a sort-of girlfriend at one point. From what we get in the episode, she loved him, but he never admitted anything on his part. We never really find out why, apart from Spock's obvious reluctance to admit to any feeling, and that's probably for the best.) Leila's talked it over with Sandoval, and has gotten the go ahead to bring Spock in with the team. So she tells him the answer to all his questions is in this really fake looking plant. When Spock gets too close, the plant hits him with some spores and ta-da: smiling half-Vulcan.

One of the reasons "Paradise" still works as well as it does (and I'd rank it as one of the best of the first season) is that for all its melodrama—between Spock and Leila, and Kirk's struggles against himself, there's a lot to go around—the ep has a terrific sense of humor about itself. Just seeing Kirk trying to deal with a goofy, carefree first officer is great fun; from their first conversation post-sporification to Kirk's utter astonishment at finding Spock literally up a tree, it's some of the funniest stuff we've seen in the show. (Slightly less funny, but still sort of charming, are McCoy's Southern accent and attempts to construct a mint julep once he gets infected.) I really love Kirk and McCoy's brief conversation after Spock's first refusal to come back. McCoy notes that Spock doesn't sound like himself, and Kirk tells the doctor, "I thought you said you might like him if he mellowed a little." McCoy's immediate backpedaling of "I didn't say that!" tells you a lot about the character.

Sandoval and his people have survived exposure to berthold rays because the plant spores render them immune. In addition, the spores make everybody cheery as hell, but they also take away a person's drive to accomplish anything. In all the time they've been on the planet, none of the colonists have made any progress in the scientific research that had driven them there in the first place. This lack of ambition becomes an even more serious problem when Spock and Sandoval arrange for the rest of the Enterprise's crew to get infected; Starfleet has issued orders that the colonists are to leave the planet, and Sandoval would rather bring everybody on the ship down to his level than leave such a good thing behind. With Spock's help, the conquest is a breeze, although it has to be one of the most laid-back mutinies in history—there's no forced exposure to the plants, and no attempt to force anyone to do anything. Just careful placement of the plants and crossed fingers. (The reason behind this lack of aggression becomes much clearer by the end.)

Soon enough, Kirk is the only man left aboard the Enterprise who isn't marvelling at the way his hand does that thing, y'know, that *thing*, and man, we really are a living part of the universe, y'know? Whoa. On his own, there's not much Kirk can accomplish, aside from bemoan his fate; Uhura sabotaged communications, so there's no way to get a message to Starfleet as to what's going on. Inevitably Kirk himself is infected, but before he can beam down to the planet, his innate sense of duty rises up and forces him back to sanity; he realizes that violent emotions, like rage, are the only way to cure the spore's influence. So he beams Spock up and picks a fight with him. (More great dialogue from Kirk: Spock is "a simpering, devil-eared freak, who's father was a computer and who's mother was an encyclopedia." And the unforgettable topper: "You belong in a circus, Spock, not a starship. Right next to the dog face boy!")

After a brief scuffle, Spock is Spock again, and that means it's only a quick spot of work to get everybody else "healthy." While Kirk's point about humans needing forward momentum to *be* human is well taken, and Sandoval himself is horrified at his inaction while infected, it's a little sad to see everybody stripped away from such a pleasant mindset. Nowhere is that sadness more apparent than when Spock confronts Leila after he's been "saved" by Kirk; he basically tells her that whether or not he has feelings for her, he is who he is, and he has his duty. This heartbreak frees Leila, although neither she nor Spock seem particularly relieved to be free. There's no sense of judgment in the episode about their sense of loss, either. In the coda, Spock tells Kirk, "for the first time in my life... I was happy." It's a simple statement; Kirk doesn't offer an apology for destroying his happiness, and Spock doesn't ask for one. Just a simple melancholic fact of existence: we are who are.

Delightfully, "Devil In The Dark" provides us with the one thing "Paradise" lacked: monsters! Or rather, monster, singular. (I guess the plants shooting the spores are sort of monster-like, but they don't have much in the way of personality.) Janus VI has some of the richest pergium deposits in the galaxy —and that's a good thing, since everybody wants and needs pergium. The mining colony on the planet has run into some serious problems of late, though. First their equipment started disintegrating, and then people started dying. Fifty so far, and the deaths haven't been pretty; corpses burned beyond all recognition. Vanderberg, the colony head, is at his wit's end. Something's out there, in the dark. Something that isn't affected by phaser fire, and can't be stopped.

Enter the Enterprise. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam down, and a preliminary scan of the planet shows that there are no other life forms around apart from Vanderberg's crew. But the scans only look for carbon-based life; what if there's something else out there? Vanderberg lays down the situation: a number of planets depend on Janus VI's pergium output, but they haven't been able to get work done during the attacks. All they've got now are a bunch of useless silicon nodules that litter the mine. Even more frustrating, Venderberg's men had just found a huge new deposit of the mineral right before miners started getting killed. It was on the lower levels, ones that they hadn't explored before, and if they could only get at it, everyone's problems would be solved.

Before anything can be decided, though, the monster strikes again, this time stealing a crucial part from the mine's nuclear reactor. The colonists don't have a spare kicking around, and neither does Scotty; something to do with the equipment being too out of date. This is not good at all, because while Scotty can work up a temporary fix, sooner or later, the reactor's going to fail and everyone is going to die. Now it's not just the potential danger of the monster killing again; now it's a matter of life and death. (Okay, so everybody could just beam back up and leave, but dammit, people need their pergium!)

I expect even those of you who haven't seen the episode have made the connection, yes? When the miners broke into the lower levels, they pissed *something* off, and that something has been taking its revenge ever since. It's just like a classic monster flick—stupid humans wake up a beasty, beasty rampages, poor beasty has to pay the ultimate price for human carelessness. And one of the reasons "Devil" is so cool is that it plays out a lot like a monster movie, from the POV shots that hide the nature of the threat till the last minute, to the way everybody has a bad habit of wandering off alone. It's not all that scary to me now, especially knowing the ending, but as a kid, this was by the far the freakiest of original *Trek* episodes. Even seeing the monster, which, to an unkind eye, is just a goofy looking hunk of carpet, didn't make me feel better. Something about the cheapness of the effect actually made it more threatening; that something could look that silly, and still be a threat.

Another common element of all those fifties monster movies is the not-entirely-sane scientist who demands that the creature be captured for the purposes of, um, humanity and learning and padding out the plot. Here we have Mr. Spock, a more than adequate substitute; he spends the episode the usual three or four steps ahead of everyone else (although notice how he doesn't come out and actually say that the silicon nodules are eggs until Kirk does? Either he's covering his ass, or we just had to make sure Kirk made the most important discovery, even if somebody else beat him to the punch), and he figures out quickly that while only one monster has been doing the attacking on Janus, the place used to be filled with 'em. He expresses regret to Kirk that the creature must be killed, and even suggests to the security team the Enterprise sends down (all red-shirts, poor bastards) that it might be nice to capture the thing alive, if possible.

Unlike those earlier scientists, however, Spock is still a realist. When Kirk wanders off and gets trapped by the creature, Spock demands over the communicators that Kirk kill the thing for his own protection. Thing is, the creature isn't making any threatening moves. Earlier in the ep, Spock and Kirk decided that one of the reasons why the colonists' phaser fire wasn't damaging the beasty was that they only had "phaser 1." When the two bump into the thing themselves, they fire on it using phaser 2, which damages it but doesn't kill it. And now, face to, er, shag with the thing, Kirk sees the wound. Is it reluctant to attack now that it knows it can be hurt? Or is it trying to communicate something?

Spock arrives, and decides the only way to proceed is to attempt to mind-meld with the thing. In his first try, he doesn't make physical contact; all he manages to discover is that the creature is called a "Horta," and it's in severe pain. The brief connection is enough to pass on information to the Horta, who burns a message in the rock: "NO KILL I." That's

enough for Kirk—while Vanderberg's men are getting increasingly restless outside, Kirk summons McCoy. Spock is going to make another pass at mind melding, this time with actual touch, and Kirk is determined that the Horta survive the attempt.

"Devil" is mostly a showcase for Kirk and Spock (Spock's mind melding acting is—well, we'll get to that), but McCoy gets one of his great moments here, when confronted by a wounded creature whose biological composition is so alien it might as well be inanimate. Spock earlier theorized that the Horta is silicon-based life, as opposed to us carbon-based folks; McCoy reacted with his usual skepticism, but Spock's theory proved out, as it explains why the phasers were so useless on the thing, and also why it was able to tunnel so efficiently through rock. (Well, that plus the corrosive juices it secretes.) This puts McCoy in a quandary; as he helpfully points out to Kirk, "I'm a doctor, not a bricklayer," but Kirk isn't having any of it. So McCoy pulls up his sleeves and improvises, using thermoconcrete from the Enterprise to patch the Horta's injury. Works like a charm, and McCoy is understandably pleased: "Jim, I'm beginning to think I can cure a rainy day!"

Vanderberg and his men are less than pleased, though; with the Horta cornered, they see their chance to strike, even going so far as to attack the red-shirts Kirk left behind to keep things orderly. They break into the room just as Spock is ending his last session—and I said I was going to talk about his mind meld, right? It should be ridiculous. Spock's basically groping a puppet and treating it like a massive spiritual and moral struggle. But it works; I'm willing to bet if you asked somebody who hadn't watched "Devil" in a while to tell you what they remembered best from it, they'd say the Horta, and Spock yelling "PAIN!" It's not memorable because it's campy, either. Nimoy's acting sells it because he never allows for a moment that what he's doing is absurd. He commits, as my old acting teacher would say, and the sequence becomes this whole tragic, horrifying tribute both to his skills as a performer and the writer behind the episode.

What Spock learns is something most of us probably figured out twenty minutes ago: the silicon nodules are eggs, and the miners inadvertently destroyed them while moving into the lower levels of the planet. The current Horta is the last one of her kind alive; they have a curious life cycle, in which every 50,000 years the entire race but one dies, and it's her job to stick around and take care of the eggs. So she'd be a little pissed if those eggs were threatened. The old "scary monster is just a loving mama" routine is familiar, but effective, and it nicely reinforces one of *TOS*'s big themes: to paraphrase *Pogo*, we have met the alien, and it is us. Vanderberg realizes the error of his ways, and an arrangement between Horta and humans is made. Everything winds up happily after all, unless you're some miner's widow, and I'm sure they were all bachelors anyway.

Not a bad way to come off last week; both "Paradise" and "Devil" are classics. I could nitpick a little, if I were so inclined, but I think I'll just leave off here. For some reason, seeing the Horta always makes me want a pizza.

#### **Grades:**

**"This Side Of Paradise": A**

**"Devil In The Dark": A**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- Ah, Spock: "Emotions are alien to me. I am a scientist."
- Spock tells Leila she "couldn't pronounce" his first name. I wonder, when was the first time that gag got used?
- Love the exchange between Kirk and Spock when Kirk tries to send Spock away from the Horta hunt; apparently the odds of them both getting killed are 2,228.7 to 1.
- Up next week: "Errand Of Mercy" and (ugh) "The Alternative Factor"

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (84)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 11:03am

Heh

"Emotions are alien to me. I am a scientist." — Spock

"Emotions are for ethnic people." — Crow T. Robot, MST3K

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 11:12am

Didn't get a chance to mention this, but "Paradise" is source of the oft used MST3K riff, "I'm not going back, Jim!"— even though, as the MST3K writers acknowledge, Spock never actually says that in the episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Poor Poor Bob](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 11:19am

If I'm not mistaken, this was one of McCoy's first, "Damn it Jim, I'm a doctor, not a (fill in the blank)" lines.

I remember walking into Sneed Hall at Texas Tech one afternoon where 20 or so guys were watching Trek on the big screen. I thought I recognized the episode and asked, "Is this the one where Bones says, 'Damn it Jim, I'm a doctor, not an escalator.'"

Everyone started booing me, telling me McCoy never said anything nearly that stupid.

About 10 seconds later, he spoke that line.

I've wasted my life, haven't I?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 12:09pm

No, Bob. In fact, someday you might find yourself in a situation where you will be able to use your own "I'm a (blank), not a (blank)" statement and you will win the day.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 12:10pm

I think once they realized Spock never says that, they started yelling "I'm in LOVE, Jim!" That was just as good.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 12:53pm

I think it was "I'm a doctor, not a bricklayer!" in reference to his duty to patch up the Horta with thermal concrete.

Arthur C. Clarke once commented about this episode that it was unique because it presented the idea, unusual in science fiction at the time, that something alien and dangerous need not be malevolent.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 1:11pm

They paraphrased a lot of Star Trek lines on MST3k. My favorite was always Spooooooooooooooooooooock!!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 2:24pm

If you haven't downloaded the RiffTrax for Star Trek VI, you're missing out on some good trekkie riffing.

[Reply](#)

- [AI running with the bulls Gore](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 2:29pm

Does McCoy ever say "Damnit Jim, I'm a man, not a forklift!" Or, was that just a joke by my high school's resident metalhead/D&D player?

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 3:43pm

El Santo, I'm glad you're here. Vampire women are attacking!

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 5:17pm

"Emotions are alien to me. I am a scientist." I could kick Roddenberry's ass for that line. Scientists are scientists because of the emotion called curiosity. An unemotional Vulcan would not become a scientist, he wouldn't wonder why things are the way they are.

I love Spock, but it set a persistent that bothers me.

I'm a botanist, by the way.

[Reply](#)

- [DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 6:11pm

That's similar to the theory that any advanced AI would need to have some kind of emotion quality because without it the machine would lack motivation and the ability to prioritize. I'm butchering this idea, which comes from a dubious source to begin with. ("The Science of Star Wars")

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 6:32pm

The thing is, emotion is a relatively easy thing to program into a computer, anyway. All you need is to set up a program that rewards appropriate behavior and punishes bad behavior (defined along human standards) and have it fed back into the machine's decision-making system. Make it value human companionship, or praise for doing a good job, etc. Make it lonely by creating a program that slowly decreases an arbitrary value that it has to respond to if it gets too low, and that it can increase by doing social things. It wouldn't be "real," but half of our own behavior is driven by stuff that isn't real, anyway. Get computers motivated to learn on their own. Give the computers pain and delight. That'll make AI happen faster than anything.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/10/09 11:08pm

Yesssss, Gentle, and then they'll get pissed off and kill us all.

[Reply](#)

- [Texas Techzan](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

4/12/09 8:43pm

The most important thing ever said on these forums...Sneed Hall at Texas Tech...guns up...go Red Raiders!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 10:56am

Nope

Spock smiled in Menagerie, Part 1\*.

\*Not a first.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)scotteb

4/10/09 10:59am

Scotteb, I think he half-smiled in "Charlie X" too, when Uhura sang her teasing song about him.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)scotteb

4/10/09 11:01am

I prefer to believe that that didn't happen, as a.) it kills my opening paragraph and b.) I didn't like the episode very much a'tall.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)scotteb

4/10/09 11:01am

And he'll smile again at the end of Amok Time.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)scotteb

4/10/09 11:06am

And then the slashfic started . . .

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)scotteb

4/10/09 12:20pm

scott - True, he smiled in "Menagerie", but IIRC that was in the flashback to the scenes that were taken from "The Cage", so it wasn't really canon compared to the regular production episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMikes](#)scotteb

4/10/09 1:35pm

I always picture Spock with the standard bemused look. Him with a smile is just wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)scotteb

4/10/09 2:08pm

I've eaten animal flesh and I enjoyed it.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)scotteb

4/10/09 2:38pm



Good one, Herpes, he smiles in that ep too, when he and McCoy end up trapped in that one history's past.

I was obsessed with the eps where Spock showed emotion. Because I had the worlds biggest nerd crush on him.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)scotteb

4/10/09 4:20pm

Didn't he have a big old smirk while splashing around at the end of Star Trek IV?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)scotteb

4/10/09 5:51pm

Near the end of Star Trek: The Motion Picture, the first one, Spock smiles and chuckles a little bit at his foolishness for trying to become emotionless, when V'ger, a completely emotionless machine worked so hard to find emotion and a soul. Again, something glossed over in that movie that could have been highlighted to make it better.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 1:44pm

why Devil in the Dark is my favorite episode

After the first few seasons of TNG, in which Picard was written as excessively politically correct (to the point of surrendering the ship in the pilot), there arose the notion that Kirk was the opposite of Picard, a promiscuous bruiser who would walk in to a situation phasers blazing. I love Devil in the Dark because it illustrates that this narrative is a lie: Kirk finds the monster who's been frying miners to a crisp, and, having cornered it, he decides to talk to it and understand it's point of view, then forge a compromise with the miners.

I've always thought it would be interesting to apply the same logic to Alien...

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)alurin

4/10/09 3:37pm

It would make for a very different movie indeed if John Hurt had a frank and emotionally charged discussion with the facehugger who laid an egg in his gut.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)alurin

4/10/09 3:39pm

I'm sure the face-hugger had so much to teach us, if only we could listen!

Also, if only it would stop eating us.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)alurin

4/10/09 4:34pm

i think that's more or less what Lance Henrikson argued in Alien 3.

[Reply](#)

- [Happy Go Lucky](#)alurin

4/10/09 4:58pm

If I was the queen in Aliens I'd be plenty pissed too if the chick from Gorillas in the Mist started frying my kids.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)alurin

4/10/09 5:19pm

But what if you were the Horta and the chick from Galaxy Quest started breaking your eggs?

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)alurin

4/10/09 11:13pm

The Aliens might actually feel something like love for humans.

You know, while they're tongue-fucking our sternums to death.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 4:17pm

what's wrong with Errand of Mercy?

dude, it's the first Klingon episode!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)tibber

4/10/09 4:26pm

Hey, the "ugh" is before "Alternative Factor."

[Reply](#)

- [tibbert](#)tibber

4/10/09 4:33pm

oops.

then again, what's wrong with The Alternative Factor?

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)tibber

4/10/09 5:02pm

Yeah, I'd like to know too.

Honestly I would, because for the life of me I can't remember what Alternative Factor is about. Even reading the synopsis on Wikipedia doesn't help. Oh well, I'll find out next week.

[Reply](#)

- [tibbert](#)tibber

4/11/09 2:26am

i also kinda like Spock's Brain. so it's probably best to just take everything i say with a grain of salt.

[Reply](#)

- [DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum](#)tibber

4/11/09 2:39am

I don't really remember it, but I think I liked "The Alternative Factor"

[Reply](#)

- [Jabbert](#)tibber

4/12/09 10:18pm

My vote for worst Star Trek episode is Catspaw. The house cat they make to look huge just looks bored when it is supposed to be chasing Captain Kirk. I always laugh during that part.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Stuff N Fluff](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 11:40am

Almost to the City on the edge of tomorrow.

That is the only episode I really remember, though not from the original broadcast, I am not that old.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Stuff N Fluff

4/10/09 12:25pm

It's surprising how many of the really good episodes are in the first season, when they had barely figured out things like the federation and the prime directive halfway through the season. But we've already gotten to "Arena", "Balance of Terror", and "Devil", with "CotEoF" nex week.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Stuff N Fluff

4/10/09 12:44pm

"City" is two weeks away, actually.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Stuff N Fluff

4/10/09 1:13pm

Damn! I mis-read Stuff's post. or possibly it's wishful thinking on my part

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Stuff N Fluff

4/10/09 6:01pm

Ellison's take: I wrote an incredibly brilliant episode, since I'm a genius. Then the network dopes, who were too stupid to understand it, dumbed it down so that all the brilliance was lost. So it was not I wrote. But I still got writer credit, and they still owe me money for it in spite of what my contract was. Did I mention how much of a genius I am?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Stuff N Fluff

4/10/09 10:26pm

I've actually got the same book Ernest does. I'm assuming I do, anyway—it's got Ellison's introduction, the original screenplay, and some commentary from various cast members on the series. I've been debating if I should pull it out and re-read it before reviewing the essay; I remember not all of the changes being as bad as Ellison suggests.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Aqualad](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 11:11am

NO KILL I

This is the best episode of the Original Series.

[Reply](#)

- [gusano cerebro](#)Aqualad

4/10/09 4:12pm

Picture tube? VCR? They let you have internet access at the nursing home?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Aqualad

4/10/09 5:56pm

When I first saw this episode (when it was originally broadcast, by the way) we had a television that ran on steam, and you had to watch the boiler pressure or the picture would go all kerflooy.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Aqualad

4/10/09 11:10pm

You damn kids— we just had series of still photos that we'd have to flip while reciting the dialogue ourselves. But we were glad for what we had.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Aqualad

4/11/09 2:01pm

Doesn't anyone else remember Star Trek: The Radio Series? Really kept us entertained during the Depression. The last one, I mean.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Aqualad

4/16/09 3:54pm

Really, I preferred Sophocles' version of Devil in the Dark, in which the Horta was played by a handsome slave boy.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 10:55am

Love these eps.

Great recaps, Zack. These two episodes are two of the best from that first season, and "Devil" is probably one of the ten best TOS eps, for exactly the reason you mentioned—it turned conventional SF monster tropes on their ears at just about every turn.

Fave moment from "This Side of Paradise" has to be the end of the Kirk/Spock fight, after Spock thoroughly kicks Jim's ass, then suddenly comes to his senses. Kirk just looks up at him and says, totally deadpan, "Had enough?" This was apparently an ad lib from Shatner that they decided to keep, and it's another great example of the way the show at its best could find humor in situations without descending to self-parody.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

4/10/09 12:46pm

Wait...a society living in perpetual bliss and harmony with some symbiont spores? Fuck that! Time to ruin this world.

"Does she know what she's getting, Spock? A carcass full of memory banks who should be squatting on a mushroom instead of passing himself off as a man. You belong in a circus, Spock, not a starship - right next to the dog-faced boy!"

Holy shit, Kirk, don't hold anything back.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [bunny-ish](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

4/10/09 1:41pm

"...scene stealing hack..?"

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

4/10/09 11:04pm

My favorite line comes after that fight, when Spock points out striking an officer is a Starfleet offense.  
"Well, if we're both in the brig, who's gonna fix the transporter?"

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

4/12/09 2:21pm

The problem I always had with "This Side of Paradise" was that the spores could affect the smarter, stronger and genetically superior Spock - but NOT have a permanent effect on Kirk? Why - because he's the star of the show, and thus can't succumb...or because Shatner was in full tooliness even this far back?

James Blish's short story adaptation of the script actually made a lot more sense in context - Kirk didn't succumb not because he's so much stronger-willed or anything, but because he's too pissed off by his crew's misbehavior for the spores to take hold.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 12:21pm

fwiw

Zach, you wrote "viola," not "voila" in the sixth paragraph. Which, admittedly, is an entertaining image, the plant hitting Spock with spores and a large string instrument.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 12:33pm

Somebody else noted it, and it's already been fixed; just takes a few seconds for the article to refresh.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 12:51pm

Cool. Just wanted to let you know in case no one else had.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquori](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 3:38pm

You should've left it 'viola'

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 6:03pm

I would have liked to have him hit with a Victrola.

[Reply](#)

- [Peter Smith](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 7:19pm

winston, i lol'd

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)i hate to be that guy

4/10/09 11:12pm

Walla Walla Washington.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 12:02pm

Spores = Zoloft

And the subsequent lack of sex drive would explain no teenagers.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)barefoot jim

4/10/09 1:37pm

Or the rays make you sterile.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)barefoot jim

4/10/09 4:28pm

The colonists arrived with kids, and they'd only been there four years. Unless every child was 14 or older when they arrived... (Again, there are all sorts of other ways to explain this, the most obvious being that Sandoval had split up the group into a bunch of different colonies, and we never see many of the people from those colonies. That's where all the kids could've wound up. I just like thinking it was nasty, y'know?)

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)barefoot jim

4/10/09 5:07pm

Child actors are a pain, lots of union rules. If the plot doesn't need them, leave them out.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)barefoot jim

4/10/09 6:02pm

Spores = Anti-Viagra

[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 10:37am

USS Lars Von Trier

I clicked on this because I thought "Devil in the Dark" would be about Spock mind-melding with a blind Bjork.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)urgh

4/10/09 3:41pm

Which reminds me, when do we get the Dogme 95 reboot of Star Trek?

[Reply](#)

- [permazorch](#)urgh

4/10/09 5:33pm

I'm filming it right now.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)urgh

4/12/09 12:14pm

Wasn't that STAR TREK 5: THE FINAL FRONTIER?

Or was that just ass all on its own...?

[Reply](#)

- [Vardulon](#)Zack Handlen

4/11/09 1:40am

Omicron Ceti III?

I thought planets were always named (Constellation) (Star#) (Planet#), like "Ceti Alpha 6".

Then again, we generally call it Alpha Centauri, so maybe I've got this all backwards.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Vardulon

4/11/09 1:58pm

You have it backwards. Look up "Bayer designation" on wikipedia. Star designations are formed [greek letter][latin genitive form of constellation name]. So Omicron Ceti III is correct, but it should be Alpha Ceti 6.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Vardulon

4/14/09 5:08pm

A star date is when you woo someone famous.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 8:05pm

That's how Jack Webb would've written it...

"Maybe each and every living adult still on Omicron watched their children die; only they were so delighted by everything that it never occurred to them to care. I guess that would make [Friday's] fight against the spore-heads a bit more black-and-white."

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Lord\_Gaga

4/10/09 9:44pm

Well, I was going more for "hushed creepy" than "starkly judgmental," but yeah—ouch.

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 5:10pm

Spock's first name

As a kid I went to one of the Trek conventions in New York...I can never remember exactly which year it was ('76? '77?), but it was the last time the entire original cast appeared together.

Only one thing has stuck with me from the Q & A—someone asked Leonard Nimoy what Spock's first name was, and he jovially gave what I'm sure was his canned response to that question: "Mister."

Also, while I'm here, and if Zack is reading: in the penultimate paragraph you wrote, "The current Horta is the last one of his kind alive...." I was all prepared to get annoyed at the masculine pronoun until you switched to the feminine thereafter. Still, it reads weird.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

4/10/09 5:34pm

Thanks for the catch—fixed.

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Zack Handlen

4/11/09 9:31pm

This Side of paradise

I've always loved that episode. I thought that the dynamic between Jill Ireland and Nimoy was the only time I'd seen Spock have sexual chemistry with someone. I never bought the chemistry between him and that Romulan commander later on. But he had it with Ireland. She was married to Charles Bronson. She died so young though, breast cancer. It's sad.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Zack Handlen

4/10/09 2:41pm

Two of...

the best TOS episodes ever, and a reminder of why I feel in love with this show as a kid. Also of interest, Shatner did most of the work for "Devil" the week his father died, which may explain the extra tinge of sadness this ep always seemed to carry for me. Or perhaps I'm just projecting since I know that.

[Reply](#)

- [Adalena Berg](#)Zack Handlen

1/21/14 6:22pm

Beware the attack of The Hamburger Helper Pile! (\*dramatic music\*) No, seriously, I love the idea of tiny little piles helping out miners, coming up to the pantsuits with hunks of mineral in their mouths(!) like an obedient Labrador with a tennis ball.

[Reply](#)

- [David R Tribble](#)Zack Handlen

2/03/17 7:05pm

Anyone else figure out what the subject in the title of 'Devil In the Dark' is referring to?

[Reply](#)



## ***Star Trek*: "Errand Of Mercy" / "The Alternative Factor"**

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published April 17, 2009

[Comments \(85\)](#)



The first season of *Star Trek* is nearly thirty episodes long. We're in the home stretch now, and while it's probably going too far to say the seams are starting to show (especially considering that the best episode of the season, and quite possibly the show, is yet to come), certain patterns have definitely emerged. We've talked about the God Being mechanic, and it comes up again in the first episode of the week, "Errand Of Mercy." "Errand" also gives us another warlike race with a leader who can't help admiring Kirk as much as he'd like to kill him. The original *Trek*, for all its lofty humanist intentions, was mostly pure pulp, and pulp isn't generally known for the shocking originality of its ideas. Energy, yeah, pacing, sexiness, action, adventure, two-fisted heroes, all that stuff, sure, that's why we love it. But you have to accept that, given enough of it, you'll end up re-treading a lot of ground.

And that's okay—the execution is just as important, and having everything blur together a bit means that when a really clever idea *does* come up (like at least half a dozen of the ones we've covered already and, of course, next week!) it looks even stronger. Also, sometimes its better to use an old idea that to use no idea at all; I'm looking at you, "Alternative Factor." (Or I would be, if I knew where the hell I was supposed to be looking.)

"Errand" does introduce us to at least one new thing—Klingons! Okay, so the Klingons here are obsessed with the honor of battle, much like the Romulans (and, one presumes, the Gorn; although that could just be my deeply ingrained mistrust of giant bipedal lizards in leopard print), but there's no getting around the fact that the species is *the* definitive *Trek* baddie. Or at least they were until the Borg came along (I'd say it's more of a tie now). Going by "Errand," it's not all that easy to see why Kor and his men captured the imagination of sci-fi freaks everywhere—Kor is fun, and the uniforms here are a lot less silly than the Romulans' blankets, but I'd argue that's it's more just the luck of the draw than any inherent quality. Heck, they don't even appear alien till the franchise hit the big screen; first run Klingons are all shoe-polish and Fu Manchu facial hair. (A quick trip to Wikipedia reveals that one of the probable reasons the race got used more than the Romulans was simply that Klingons were easier and cheaper to put together.)

Whatever the reason, Klingons became the Russia to Starfleet's U.S.A., so if nothing else, "Errand" offers some historical context. And while the story chickens out in the end, it's initially quite clever in setting up the dynamic

between Kirk, Kor, and the peaceful Organians whose minds both sides are desperate to sway. By the end of the ep, even the great James T. is looking a little foolish in his defense of a species' right to go all kill-crazy; so I guess it's lucky that he's landed on one of the few planets in the universe that could ignore his defense and put a decisive, non-fatal end to all the squabbling. (Actually, it doesn't seem that lucky at all. The rate we're going, I would've been surprised if Kirk and Spock *hadn't* found creatures capable of bending matter to their will.)

We open, as is often the case, on the Enterprise bridge; after an info dump explaining that Starfleet's negotiations with the Klingons have broken down, and that the nearby world Organia offers the turning-out-to-be-enemies a perfect location to set up base camp in case of war, the Enterprise is attacked. Due to budgetary constraints, it's a short battle, and we don't even see the other ship—just an exchange of fire, and Sulu's confirmation that their attacker is completely destroyed in the melee. It's a hollow, kind of pointless moment, over before you're even aware it started.

But at least it's quick. Soon as the battle is won, the message comes in from Starfleet—it's Code One. War has been declared. That means Organia has gone from theoretical talking point to crucial military target, so the Enterprise beats feet (or interstellar equivalent) to the planet, where Kirk and Spock beam down, leaving Sulu in charge. Kirk gives Sulu specific orders: if the Klingons show up, assess the danger, and if it's a whole fleet, get the hell gone. As always, the Kirk's ship (and the people on it) take precedence over Kirk's life. It also means that, when the inevitable fleet does arrive, Kirk and Spock will be stranded below. Otherwise, we wouldn't really have a middle act.

The Organians are supposed to be peaceful, friendly, and quite primitive, even by our standards. Upon arrival, Kirk and Spock are welcomed by a friendly gentleman named Ayelborne; he takes them to see the Council of Elders. While Spock does some wandering, Kirk makes his pitch—the Klingons are nasty sons of guns, and the council, and all the people on the planet, are in grave danger. They need to be prepared to defend themselves (shades of the Vietnam war here, with America wanting to protect South Vietnam from invading Commies), and Kirk—and Starfleet—want to help. One of the things that makes this sequence, and others in the episode like it, so fascinating is how Kirk seems a little two-faced in his pleas. There's no doubt that he believes that the Organians will be harmed by the Klingons, but he doesn't make much mention of how important the planet is to his side in terms of the whole war. Failing to acknowledge that makes his increasingly desperate encouragements just a little bit awkward.

But whatever his motives may be, he does want to help, and he does have a point. So why are the Organians so obstinate in their pacificism? Like "Arena" before it, "Errand" is a combo episode, mixing two standard *Trek* plotlines in order to fill out the hour; here it's "fighting the evil aliens" and "investigating a place where nothing seems to make much sense." Until the Klingons arrive, we're heavy into the latter plot, with Spock discovering that the whole race seems to be a textbook example of an arrested culture, with no apparent developments or innovations made in thousands of years. Plus there's the Council's baffling calm in the face of armageddon. It's an intriguing set-up, even if the resolution is predictable, and one of the things that makes it work better than it should is that the mystery isn't resolved for a while. Kirk is less mystified than frustrated by what's going on, and once Kor shows up, he gets so caught up in fighting back that he forgets to concern himself with anything else. It's a small thing, but as structural tweaks go, an effective one.

As for the Klingons themselves? Not bad, and Kor is certainly fun, but it would be a while before they'd develop to real iconic status. Once they beam down to the planet, they immediately take control of the main city, and Kor starts issuing a list of ordinances that must be followed on pain of death. One nice touch is that Kor shares Kirk's growing contempt for the non-violent Organians; Kirk initially poses as a native of the planet, but Kor quickly recognizes him as a like mind, at least in terms of backbone. Spock claims to be a Vulcan merchant, which doesn't go over all that well—Kor has him sent to the "truth finder," a nifty device that can read a man's mind, or empty it, if one were so inclined. Spock being Spock, he can defend himself against the machine's invasions, but dramatic law should dictate that Kirk find himself faced with the thing at some point. Only he never does. We never even see the machine; Kor uses it as a threat later in the episode, but he never follows through.

The most exciting aspect of "Errand" is Kirk's abortive attempts to start a revolution against the Klingon oppressors. Again, we have to wonder at what's driving him—while the Klingon law is obviously harsh, Kirk and Spock seem the only people in the area even remotely bothered by it. And the Klingons don't start executing the locals till *after* Kirk and

Spock start mucking around. There's a certain arrogance to our captain's actions that fits well with the final reveal; he's decided he knows what's right, and by god, he's going to make sure that's what happens. He and Kor even bond over how much they dislike the Organians and their refusal to get involved—sure, they're both enemies to the death and all, but at least they plan to go down fighting. Why even bother having other species around if you aren't going to try and kill 'em at some point?

Turns out that the Organians aren't actually cowards; they're energy beings so far advanced beyond our own limited capacity that the very act of interacting with Kirk and Kor actually "disgusts" them. (Which begs the question, why get involved at all? Why set up an entire illusory town, full of fake people to get fake killed, when you can barely stand to deal with these savages?) They've decided that this whole war thing is very silly, and they're going to put an end to it; which they do by making all the weapons on the planet, and in space, too hot to handle. (Cute, that.) Kor and Kirk get upset—after all, what right do the Organians have to decide the fates of others? But no matter, what's done is done, and we're probably better off in the long run for it. And hey, the big flowing light guys disappear at the end, so there's no reason we can't fight tomorrow.

"Errand" is fun (and the usual Kirk/Spock dynamic is in fine form), but in some ways it's a case of missed opportunities. There are logical holes throughout (given that the Klingons were due to arrive at any minute, Kirk's plan to just beam himself and Spock to the planet to rile up the locals seems ill-advised, especially since the locals didn't have the tech to combat the Klingons; did he just expect them to throw rocks?), but the biggest problem is the cop-out ending. While it's nice to see Kirk forced to confront his own failings for once, having the whole thing turn out to be a game with no consequences feels more than a little cheap. It would've been stronger (and admittedly harder to write) if the Organians really had been what they appeared to be—just some nice folks who don't want to get mixed up in all the craziness.

Whatever its flaws, though, at least it makes *sense*. The same can't really be said for "The Alternative Factor," a fifty minute long struggle to get a square peg into a round hole—something like your eye socket—that represents the bottom of the barrel for the series this far. You can say it has ambition, and maybe it does; after all, the Enterprise is battling against cosmic forces that put this universe and in the next in harm's way. Problem is, the only real impression this ep gives is of a handful of half-ideas so undercooked that most of them are still mooing. Or clucking, or snarling, or whatever the hell sound ideas make before you burn 'em alive.

Kirk and the crew are doing a routine investigation of another uncharted planet when an Effect hits, freaking everyone out and throwing the bridge into confusion. The Effect is just some static shocks of a starfield super-imposed over footage of our heroes; it'll get more involved later on, but expect to get really, really sick of it before the episode's conclusion. Word comes in from Starfleet that the Effect spanned the galaxy, although it appears to have been strongest coming from the planet the Enterprise is orbiting. Order are to investigate what the hell is going on; so it's a good thing that a life form suddenly appeared on the previously lifeless planet below, or else there wouldn't be anyone around to investigate.

Kirk beams down with a team, and they find a mini-flying saucer ship, and a crazy dude called Lazarus. Lazarus is upset, and he will continue to be upset throughout the ep. Except for those times in which he isn't upset, but he's not really himself then, so those hardly count. Laz passes out before Kirk can get much out of him, and it's back to the Enterprise, where we dump the new guy in Sick Bay (off-screen) and Spock and Kirk try and figure out just what the hell is going on. Here's where we run into one of "Factor"'s biggest problems, in that everybody is constantly telling us things we've already figured out, in slightly different ways. So this Effect, right? It's the universe winking out. And it's centered over the planet. And right after it happened, Lazarus showed up. Don't forget, the Effect is strongest in this area. The area with Lazarus. The area that Lazarus wasn't in before the Effect, but now is, or was when they found him. I wonder if the two are connected?

What's even more frustrating is that for all this repeated information, there seems to be precious few hard facts flying around. Kirk demands Lazarus give him answers, but the guy just rattles about some monster that has to be destroyed, demanding Kirk use the Enterprise's resources to help him. Of course, we eventually find out that Lazarus has a good reason for not explaining himself, being just as crazy as he appears to be, and even more dangerous. But to get to that point means wading through an awful lot of circuitous dialogue, circuitous action, and the endless replays of the Effect,

now with added bonus footage of two men struggling against each other in what looks like reversed-negative film. That sounds like it should be cool, and the first couple of times it kind of is, but then it keeps happening—and it always runs too long.

There's more beaming back and forth on the planet, Lazarus refusing to give anything away; Spock finds a radiation source on the planet that wasn't there before, using the ship's dilithium crystals in a way I don't entirely understand. (Also, a Lieutenant Masters told Kirk the crystals were drained after the Effect, which means—nothing, turns out.) Lazarus decides he wants some crystals to aid in his quest, which of course Kirk won't give him. Right about now is when you'd think Kirk would want to keep an especially close eye on the psycho stranger, but the guy apparently just wanders out of Sick Bay (again, off-screen). He spends some time in the cafeteria, where we get what has to be most illogical conversation in an ep jammed packed with the stuff:

Masters: Hi. Coffee?

Red-shirt: Is that an order Lieutenant?

Masters: I know what you mean.

Well, I'm glad somebody does.

We get a scene with Kirk and McCoy that introduces one of "Factor"'s big clues—the fact that Lazarus had a head wound when he was brought to the doctor, but after another dose of the Effect, the wound had vanished. The cut, and the bandage that goes on top of it, will disappear and reappear throughout the remainder of the show; it's not a continuity error, but an indication that crazy Lazarus has been replaced with another guy who looks just like him, but is sane.

Okay, that should be smart, but it doesn't play out right. Ff sane guy is so sane (and when Kirk finally does have a chat with him, the dude is reasonable and decent), why doesn't he bother to tell anybody on the Enterprise what's going on? Crazy Lazarus sure doesn't have any problems expressing his needs. Maybe Sane Lazarus is too muddled to know what's happening—but if that's the case, why does he steal the dilithium crystals *himself* and then tell Kirk later on that he did it to stop his nuttier other from taking them? (That doesn't go well at all, since the next time Crazy Lazarus escapes from Sick Bay—right after McCoy has Kirk send security away and claims that Lazarus will stay put this time—he grabs some more crystals.)

The best I can parse it—and this is baffling, unrewarding crap right here, like trying to figure out the Final Five's history on *Battlestar Galactica* if the show had been created by Albert Pyun—is that crazy Lazarus used to be a happy guy, and then some sciencey thing happened, and he found out that he had an anti-matter twin. (Oh yeah, the sane dude is anti-matter.) The idea that he could have a duplicate drove him crazy, so he decided to track the guy down and kill him. Only thing is, if the two of them are ever in the same universe at the same time, both universes will go kerblooey. It sort of almost makes sense, if you ignore the ramblings about a destroyed world; Crazy Lazarus claims that his flying saucer ship is actually a time ship, and he's from some other when, but it's hard to trust a guy who sweats that much.

What really kills this episode is the pacing; a lot of time is spent wandering around, and we don't get the real truth of things (such as it is) till the last ten minutes, when Kirk inadvertently gets sucked into one of Lazarus's inter-dimensional thingamajigs and meets Sane Lazarus, who explains what I've already explained above. It's not really a terrible idea—finding out that the guy who we thought was the hero is actually a nutter can be fun—but the execution and timing are lacking. Sane Lazarus convinces Kirk to help him trap the crazy one in the "safety valve" passage between the matter and anti-matter dimensions, and when Kirk comes back to our universe, he does just that, fighting with Crazy Lazarus just long enough to shove him into his own trap. (Note how Spock and the security detail just watch this without trying to help or intervene.) Another a cool idea: both Lazaruses (Lazari?) are trapped forever between dimensions, doomed to struggle for all eternity, or else until they starve to death. In a stronger episode, that could've meant something.

We end with some faux-poetic dialogue that only serves to remind us of the emptiness we just sat through:

Spock: And what of Lazarus?

Kirk: And what of Lazarus.

Then:

Spock: There is, of course, no escape for them, sir.

Kirk: There is, of course, no escape.

Until, finally:

Kirk: But what of Lazarus? What of Lazarus.

Lazarus, y'know? Just—Lazarus.

**Grade:**

**"Errand Of Mercy": B+**

**"The Alternative Factor": C-**

**Stray Observations:**

- In a possible bit of continuity, Starfleet issues another Code One during "Factor," warning of invasion.
- Next week, "City On The Edge Of Forever" and "Operation—Annihilate!"

## DISCUSSION

- Community (84)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 11:18am

Trek enemies

1) Borg pre-Queen

2) Dominion

3) Klingons

4) Romulans

5) Borg post-Queen

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 11:33am

7) Paramount

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Alpine Strangerfinder](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 11:37am

8) Rick Berman & Brannon Braga

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 11:54am

The writers of "Enterprise."

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 12:02pm

0) Trekkies

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 12:04pm

I wouldn't say "Borg pre-Queen" and "Borg post-Queen." I'd go with "TNG-Borg" and "Voyager-Borg." Because the Queen was pretty cool in First Contact.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [DCRJD](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 12:37pm

10) Cardassians, yo.

There are four lights!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 1:24pm

11.) The Ferengi

Capitalism is scary.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 1:36pm

Um, hello, Q, anyone? I know he's not a race, but still.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 1:46pm

Cardassians- That \*one\* Cardassian was awesome in "Chain of Command," but he was only one guy. The rest of them got owned by that two-bit jerk who served in Picard's place. Cardassians were always getting slapped around by the Federation until joining with the Dominion, so they fall under that.

Q- Helped save humanity in "All Good Things." Helped humanity be aware of the Borg threat in "Q Who?". Not a bad guy, per se.

I liked the idea of the Borg Queen at first, but they beat it to death. Voyager had not one, not two, but three separate two-part episodes in which Janeway easily one-upped the Queen. And this is supposed to be some menacing evil? She's a dummy, that's what. Plus, the original Borg, with no centralized leader to muck things up, were much more ruthless.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 1:48pm

DCRJ, I just saw that episode recently. Just completely rocks. David Warner is just awesomely ruthless as the Cardassian interrogator, and Ronny Cox takes no prisoners as the new Enterprise captain. He tells Riker to get his jazzy, bearded ass off his bridge, makes Data his first officer (he knows a good loyal bot when he sees one), and tells new agey, crystal-power Counselor Troi to suit the fuck up when she's on duty. Season Six: Chain of Command, Parts I and II.

[Reply](#)

- [X-Ray](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 2:11pm

Q is one of those beings that is neither enemy nor friend to humanity but a watcher of things. A lot like the Organions and other all-powerful races present in Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 2:33pm

El Santo, I think it's more subtle than that: "Capitalists are scary, particularly if they talk funny and have some facial feature that is outsized."

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 3:47pm

Why do you have to be so anti-Semitic?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 4:23pm

Passover makes me cranky.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 4:33pm

Didn't Q create the problem in "All Good Things" to begin with? And would the Borg have been aware of humanity if Q hadn't flung them a million light years away?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 4:48pm

I hated the Borg Queen idea. Telling me that I find a discrepancy where none exists is all well and good except when that discrepancy is well and truly there.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 5:46pm

13-143.) McGuffins.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)D.N. Nation

4/17/09 6:55pm

Actually, I think Q enjoyed a hearty laugh over the fact that it was Picard who started the anti-time anomaly in "All Good Things...", though he does get credit / blame for the Borg thing. But it's OK, because they became total pushovers

by the end of Voyager. In TNG, they took out more than half the Federation fleet, but in Voyager they were taken down by a single ship that spent seven seasons trying to get home. Two dogs and cat did that, and it only took them one movie.

[Reply](#)

- [borracho3000](#)D.N. Nation

4/18/09 1:49am

Come on, the Borg are just Cybermen with better wardrobe, and even Doctor Who can kick a bunch of Cybermen's asses. Doctor Who doesn't even have photon torpedoes!

Much more deserving of a spot on the villain list is Starfleet Command. Why, Commodore Deckard is slightly more dangerous than The Doomsday Machine all by himself.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

4/18/09 9:58am

DarbyOFakename wins this round.

[Reply](#)

- [Banou](#)D.N. Nation

4/18/09 11:20am

The number one enemy, from TNG onwards, was more insidious than the Borg, more sneaky than the Ferengi, and killed more Starfleet officers than the Cardassians. They infiltrated every ship and starbase, trapping and killing people at random, and Starfleet seemed helpless against them.

I am talking, of course, about that sinister race, the Holodecks.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)D.N. Nation

4/19/09 12:42pm

Look at what they did to poor Lt. Barclay!

[Reply](#)

- [best commenter](#)D.N. Nation

4/22/09 12:47pm

11) crusher.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 10:39am

I hate to be a Nerd, but...

The Klingon's first appear as more alien in the first Star Trek movie. I know, I am lame.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 10:51am

Fixed. Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:21am



Good news! I really liked how you worked out "The Alternative Factor." It has to be a lot more difficult to mine an episode for how it didn't work, as opposed to how it did, but you really made the best of it and gave me a lot to think about next time it rolls around in syndication.

Bad news! You're mixing up the possessive of "it" and the contraction of "it is."

Great Trek stuff as always. Thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:24am

So this Event in The Alternative Factor - is it some kind of... Happening?

Nice write-up as always Zack - as a European bored at work, can I also say that this is the perfect time for postings for me - finally I can get in at the BEGINNING of a thread rather than the arse end of one two days late!

And yes, pretty much The Slow-Motion Picture's only meaningful contribution to ST lore was giving Klingons cranial ridges. And, you know, bald chicks. Also Zach, you didn't mention it but the flying saucer prop in Alternative is really REALLY bad. Lost In Space bad. Not as bad (or nylon-y!) and Lazerus's beard, but bad. The corridor effect is actually pretty neat for 1967 (especially on TV rather than in cinema), but yea, drags on wwwaaayyy too long.

And whither the Organians? They are introduced as these awesome aliens who are going to sort out the irrelevancies of humanity (and Klingons, Romulans et al) and are promptly never heard from again. Which is a relief of course because otherwise it would have been a very boring show (Captain's Log Stardate 2415.5 - still not allowed to have a damned battle. Also running low on Yeoman Rand's list of sexual tricks).

[Reply](#)

- [Crankypants McGee](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:44am

As a kid, there was something about that "What of Lazarus?" business that stuck in my head. I think Kirk says something about Sane Lazarus being trapped forever with a madman at his throat. I always thought that some sci-fi quality of the little inter-dimensional hallway that the Lazaruses are trapped in would keep them alive for eternity, fighting.

And now I've shared a cubicle with a swing dance enthusiast, I have some inkling of what that would actually be like.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:47am

Prole, the Orangians do show up again in Star Trek- albeit in Enterprise (so technically, Errand is the second time they've interacted with humanity). It was a sort of cheap episode, though, and in the end the Organians mind-wipe anyone that figured out who they were, to keep continuity with TOS intact, as it were.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:52am

You have my sympathies Crankypants - if it makes you feel any better 15 minutes in the company of Dutch television will make sharing a cubicle with a swing dance enthusiast feel like the mere blink of an eye. Never has the word "parochial" been so vividly defined in visual terms.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 11:57am

The Organians — or at least the Peace Treaty they inspired — also show up in a roundabout way in "The Trouble With Tribbles" as the impetus for the entire episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 1:42pm

In the novels, the Organians are somehow linked to the Providers, and are seen as possibly part of the old First Federation, the one billions of years ago that seeded most of the galaxy with bacteria or other critters that would eventually evolve into the common humanoid types.

I think that's how I remember it, anyway. It all gets very fuzzy.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 2:38pm

Thanks for the heads-up Right Wingnut, I didn't know they had been in Enterprise (my big Trekkie blind-spot). @Barefoot Jim, yea they are mentioned in Tribbles but they don't turn up or, you know actually do anything like they threaten in this episode. But you are right they are mentioned!

@WYMM - Which novel? Thought I had covered most of them but must be honest I don't remember that.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 3:55pm

You don't have to love me to get a discount.

I honestly don't remember which novel. I seem to recall that it had more to do with the Preservers, looking for artifacts or something, and it mentions that the Organians were likely some remaining offshoot of the Preservers, who apparently pretty much vanished. Sorry.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Right Wingnut

4/17/09 4:30pm

Crankypants, that "madman at his throat" line always stuck with me from childhood too. Mostly because when I saw this at age 8, I was trying to get a grip on eternity and the universe and how spooky the whole thing could be. Thus, I remember being Keanu-ed out by "The Alternative Factor," but haven't seen it in years and years. I still think of it as a philosophically mind-blowing ep. Sounds like this is going to be my Ask the AVC "childhood love vs. adult shame" moment.

[Reply](#)

- [best commenter](#)Right Wingnut

4/22/09 12:48pm

look around you, can you form some sort of rudimentary lathe?

[Reply](#)

- [Zod](#)Right Wingnut

3/27/15 8:56pm

It's called a movie budget vs a TV budget.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [horsecow](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 11:30am

"Errand" as anti-Vietnam message

This seemed like a case where we weren't meant to empathize with Kirk at all — he was the bad guy, just as much as the Klingons. The things that normally make him so admirable — his sense of adventure, aggression, competitiveness

— made him into an imperialist in this episode. Perhaps a more enlightened imperialist than the Klingons, but a bad guy nonetheless.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)horsecow

4/17/09 12:02pm

It does introduce a degree of moral ambiguity (or at least authoritarian ambiguity) into what was otherwise a fairly black and white universe (Starfleet = always right, everyone else = always wrong) and that's definitely a very welcome development. And yes, if the Klingons are the USSR to Starfleet's USA, then there's a logic to the Organians being a Vietnam (or Korea), a battleground where ideologies are fought out on land other than that of the countries espousing them. Funny to think that it's only forty years ago that seemed like a development as opposed to the norm.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)horsecow

4/17/09 12:18pm

USA! USA! USA!

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)horsecow

4/17/09 12:21pm

But yes, the anti-imperialist reversal is what makes this episode a cut above others. You really do get a sense of Kirk and even Spock's arrogance. And it is nice to see some energy beings that are not forcing people to fight each other.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)horsecow

4/17/09 12:43pm

This type of moral ambiguity comes into play during "A Private Little War" as well, the infamous "Yeti" episode during the 2nd season when Kirk and company essentially become arms dealers. I remember feeling conflicted about that one growing up - how can the good guys be helping kill people?

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)horsecow

4/17/09 1:44pm

Am I misremembering, or didn't the Organians mention that the Klingons never actually killed anyone during the "mass executions"? Did this just mean that the Organians, being pure energy, weren't really killed, or was it a nod to the power of propaganda, and the idea that if people think millions have been killed, they'll act differently than they would otherwise?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)horsecow

4/17/09 1:52pm

No Organian was harmed during the making of "Errand"; I think the idea was that they'd created a fantasy of people for the Klingons to kill (fantasies that apparently left real bodies behind) for some reason. Maybe they were hoping the Klingons would come to their senses eventually?

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)horsecow

4/17/09 4:29pm

Yes, DCRJ, I remember "A Private Little War" as an even clearer Cold War apology than "Errand".

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)horsecow

4/17/09 4:55pm

"A Private Little War" was a justification of the Vietnam War specifically and proxy wars in general - Kirk even mentions the Asian "brush wars of the 20th century" when he's justifying his arms dealing plans to Dr. McCoy.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [bkZack Handlen](#)

4/17/09 1:41pm

Kor will return...

As Count Baltar! Take that, 1978! Colicos-Vision!

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)bk

4/17/09 3:41pm

By your command?

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)bk

4/17/09 4:58pm

and after his Baltar gig didn't work out, he went back to being Kor on DS9, after somehow developing cranial ridges.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)bk

4/19/09 12:31am

Yeah, didn't TNG give some bullshit reason for the Klingons having ridges, like Ruffles potato chips?

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)bk

4/19/09 9:44am

Enterprise did. Something about Klingons wanting to be more like humans or somesuch, and accidentally releasing a virus that wiped out the Klingons' ridges. By the time of the first movie, the virus was gradually losing effect, and the ridges were starting to grow back, appearing fully by NextGen.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)bk

4/19/09 12:41pm

uuuchhhh

Enterprise is the worst

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)bk

4/28/09 2:04pm

Some things are better left unexplained. Writing prequels that try and explain future inconsistencies leaves us with an even worse problem: ham-handed exposition.

See also: Star Wars episodes I-III

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [bob dobbs died for you](#)mizerock

9/13/11 10:18am

I've heard this complaint about the prequels before and I honestly don't get it. The prequels didn't try to explain away inconsistencies, it created inconsistencies.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 11:58am

The Universe Winking Out

I hate when that happens.

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)barefoot jim

4/17/09 3:43pm

I liked the little space ship. It was a spaceship for the single space traveler on the move. No need to haul around 400 other people!

I don't remember it as a prop for any other TV show (Outer Limits?) or movie, so maybe they built it just for Star Trek. But I doubt it. It's probably just my bad memory acting up again.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)barefoot jim

4/17/09 4:56pm

I'm sure they found it in a shed somewhere and decided to build an episode around it.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)barefoot jim

4/18/09 7:49pm

I often pronounce vegetable the same way, but I'm aping My Blue Heaven rather than Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 1:42pm

That's funny

I didn't get a chance to rewatch these episodes this week, but I remember "The Alternative Factor" vividly from watching it as a kid, and thinking it was great. Maybe the plot repetition, along with the starfield and negative image effects were more appealing to me as a kid then they would be as an adult. Now I have to go back and watch it to see if I agree with you. I will curse you forever if you ruin my memory of this episode, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissians](#)scotteb

4/17/09 2:04pm

The thing I remember most distinctly is Kirk wrapping things up at the end by wistfully musing "And what of Lazarus?" Shatner acts the crap out of it, but it is totally unearned emotional poignancy. Nice try "The Alternative Factor" but no.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMikes](#)scotteb

4/20/09 1:05am

The anti-matter me loved this episode.

[Reply](#)

- [strange\\_attractor](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 11:21am

There is, of course, no escape

Y'know, a lot of the dialog quoted here sounds exactly like Mystery Science Theater 3000 riffing...

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)strange\_attractor

4/17/09 1:23pm

I'm definitely getting a "Tom Servo" vibe, too.

"On 'The Alternative Factor,' Lazarus is caught in a deadly game of cat and mouse."

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)strange\_attractor

4/17/09 2:03pm

Tonight's episode: "Final Frontier of MURDER!"

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 11:37pm

We Ae Klingons! - Christopher Lloyd

There's something to be mined in The Bill O'Reilly Alternative Factor, I just haven't figured out what. Suggestions?

Errand of Mercy is generally underrated, I think. It's definitely an allegory for Viet Nam as nearly all the Kingon-involved episodes were. It certainly is interesting how the Klingons evolved over time, not just in their physical representation, but as different writers (and times) changed them into different things for different eras. The enemy is always "the other" despite the blood wine, cranial ridges, and metamorphosing notions of honor.

I alwys thought Worf was as equal a successor to Mr. Spock as Data more obviously was.

And, yes, for all it's seeming "hard" sci-fi, The A;ternative Factor is terrible; almost worse than Spock's Brain in a way.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Captain January

6/20/14 9:46am

Jaysus. Michael Dorn can't act when his *whole* face is showing. C'mon.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

1/10/14 4:49pm

Maybe I'm in the minority, but I actually found The Alternative Factor interesting... strange but interesting.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Jason Mucci

6/20/14 9:43am

In Cushman's new book he details all the things that went off the rails and contributed to the episode's murk, including losing its guest star a day or two before shooting began.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 9:42am

"But you have to accept that, given enough of it, you'll end up re-treading a lot of ground."

Christ, Zack, whatever put this particular bug so far up your ass? Shakespeare stole or recycled all his plots, but you talk about it as though it was something shameful. FFS, get a clue about the history of art and lit, willya? This was old the third time you ranted about it.

"(Which begs the question, why get involved at all? Why set up an entire illusory town, full of fake people to get fake killed, when you can barely stand to deal with these savages?)"

Because it's nonetheless the Organian home planet. The idea was if possible to get and keep these two, silly meat species engaged with the stage play, then depart so the Organians could get back to whatever energy beings do. The ending isn't a copout in any sense. It's meant to take a step back from even well-intentioned militarism (Vietnam, anyone?).and show its absurdities.

[Reply](#)

- [try the veal its the best in t](#)Jack Strawb

10/11/14 1:16am

calm down

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)try the veal its the best in t

10/12/14 2:27am

Thanks for intelligently engaging.

Sigh.

[Reply](#)

- [try the veal its the best in t](#)Jack Strawb

10/12/14 11:05am

throwing a giant shitfit over a five-year old review of a tv episode

intelligently engaging!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)try the veal its the best in t

10/15/14 2:36am

Said the whiny bitch who inveighed against my intelligent response, apparently solely because you're a sadly brainless shite. When someone replies to an old article, its in the hopes of intelligent engagement, not in order to raise the corpse of a pathetic loser like you.

[Reply](#)

- [try the veal its the best in t](#)Jack Strawb

10/15/14 11:38am

you're a big gamergate fan aren't you

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Doc Eon](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 10:40am

Alien-looking Klingons

Didn't they make their first appearance in the (TOS-based) movies, not on TNG?

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)Doc Eon

4/17/09 10:55am

Ninjad by the minute it took me to double-check my memory against imdb.

Doh!

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Zack Handlen

4/18/09 6:43pm

Title Goes Here

The Organians figured prominently in the first-ever Star Trek novel, which I eagerly picked up as a 13-year-old in 1970: Spock Must Die! by James Blish.

With respect to The Alternative Factor: It might seem quite unremarkable by today's standards, but Lieutenant Masters of Engineering, mentioned in the review, was a black woman (played by, it says here, Janet MacLachlan), the only one to appear in the whole series besides Nichelle Nichols as far as I recall. The script gave her a fair number of lines, too. [David Gerrold's The World of Star Trek (1973) at one point analyzes this aspect of the show - the real attention to diversity among guest actors in the first season, quite unusual for the mid-1960s, which then gradually dropped off, until in the third season (not counting humanoid aliens) the episodes offer lip-service to diversity instead, i.e., the "infinite diversity in infinite combinations" (IDIC) medallion.]

[Reply](#)

- [Patrick Brown](#)Zack Handlen

3/21/17 4:27pm

Errand of Mercy is a brilliant and bold Vietnam allegory that suggests that America/NATO (the federation) is just as guilty of hubris and brutality as the eastern block, that impugns the paternalism of postwar US foreign policy, that suggests that the US is fine with guerrilla warfare when it serves their purposes, that castigates the hypocrisy of American hawks vis-a-vis Russia and the third world. One thing it is definitely NOT is mere pulp or mere silly fun—though it is ALSO pulp and silly fun.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [dennis peenfellow](#)Zack Handlen

3/17/12 12:48am

Funny that people still tend to make the Russia/USA parallel. I think you're looking too hard. In fact, a closer inspection would have the roles switched in terms of the ideologies of the players involved. Starfleet is a moneyless and progressive utopia fueled by knowledge rather than profit; while the Klingons mass murder for resources and in doing so forge a feared empire.

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

1/13/14 2:14pm

I actually liked the ending to Errand. I didn't find it to be a cop-out. I thought it was a nice twist. I think it was actually the only logical explanation of why the Organians were not only pacifists but totally unconcerned with what the Klingons would do to them. And a nice lesson on the stupidity of war in general.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

4/17/09 4:52pm

Information Society

To those who doubt you can sample one of Spock's lines from "Errand of Mercy" and turn it into a hit song, I give you Information Society's smash single "What's On Your Mind (Pure Energy)" from 1988.

<http://www.tinyurl.com/cg966w>

Ahhh, the 80s.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)



- [lasagna for 1](#)Zack Handlen

5/29/13 11:39pm

That time warp thing felt like a Flaming Lips video.

[Reply](#)

- [best commenter](#)Zack Handlen

4/22/09 12:46pm

is that

James dean as you Genghis?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The City On The Edge Of Forever" / "Operation--Annihilate!"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published April 24, 2009

[Comments \(161\)](#)



*McCoy: Do you know what you just did?*

*Spock: He knows, Doctor. He knows.*

Here we are at the end of the first season, and before we finish the final two episodes, I thought it would be nice to take a moment to bask in it all. To savor things. To think about what we've learned. Don't mess with strange aliens, because they could be godlike beings of unfathomable powers, or really pissed off mothers. (So, godlike beings all around, then.) Being a starship captain is a great way to pick up women; too bad you'll leave all of them because your ship comes first. Monsters, no matter how silly, can be deadly, so make sure to have a cushion of at least three non-descript goons to stand between you and whatever danger lurks ahead. Spock knows everything.

Also, time travel, even under the best of circumstances, is a pain in the ass.

There. Deep breaths, some back-patting, empty compliments on how much we've accomplished, vague, optimistic commentary on what lies down the road. Good stuff. Too bad there's no wine to pass around, but let's all pretend we're drunk on achievement, 'kay?

"The City On The Edge Of Forever" is the first episode of *Star Trek* I ever owned. It was on one of the VHS releases they did in the nineties, and I think I've still got it kicking around somewhere. Sentimental reasons, and all that. I remember buying it because I was trying to get back into *Trek* and wasn't sure where to start; even then, I knew "City" was one of the big ones. I'm not sure its reputation has reached much beyond basic *Trek* fandom (I think if you were to mention the title to a non-fan, they'd probably assume you were talking about a Jefferson Starship song), but given the inherently contentious nature of fandom, it says something about the quality of the episode that just about everybody agrees it's excellent.

I was heavy into Harlan Ellison at the time, and seeing his name on the back of the box didn't hurt. It would be a couple years before I'd know about the whole controversy over the way Ellison's original script was handled; now I have a

copy of his published teleplay, which includes a lengthy introductory essay on just how thoroughly nearly everyone fucked him. (Everyone except Nimoy. Everybody loves Spock.) Having read Ellison's original and watched the filmed version multiple times, I can see good and bad to the changes that were made. At this point, it seems sort of moot to get into the whole thing. Whatever he feels about it, "City" is a justly revered classic, and Ellison is part of that.

Probably the worst change comes in at the beginning. The Enterprise has been drawn to a strange new planet, led there by unusual temporal readings; now they're in orbit, charting various waves of turbulence caused by "ripples in time." So far, so good. But then the helm blows up a little, injuring Sulu, and McCoy is called to the bridge. Sulu has a heart flutter, so McCoy decides to risk injecting him with "a few drops of cordrazine." The meds bring Sulu up and about, but the next time ripple sends McCoy sprawling, and he accidentally injects himself with the crazy drug.

It's a little awkward. McCoy's drug induced ravings eventually lead him down to the planet, where he jumps through a time gate and butterfly flaps his way into a whole mess of trouble. But while McCoy's craziness is fairly entertaining, the idea that he'd inadvertently inject himself with what is apparently The Most Dangerous Medicine Known To Man is a stretch. In Ellison's original script, the instigator was a new character, a drug dealer who escaped into the past to try and get away from Kirk. Roddenberry put the kibosh on the concept—no drug dealers on the Enterprise, thank you very much—and the fix still shows some of the scars from where it was forced into place. For such a classic episode, "City" has a surprisingly awkward start, with little indication of the greatness that is to follow.

We've done time travel before, of course. The sets we see once Kirk and Spock jump to the past look pretty familiar, although it's nice for once that they're standing in for Depression-era Earth, and not some supposedly otherworldly approximation of same. As for how they get there, it's familiar Ellison-style pseudo-poetics, based on exploiting our natural affections for extremes (notice how everything on this planet seems to be vaguely epic?). When the landing party beams down to chase after the violent and paranoid McCoy, they find ruins that stretch out for miles, and this strange, O-shaped object that proves to be the source of the time disturbance. A simple question ("What is it?") gets the gate up and running, operated by a disembodied voice calling itself "The Guardian of Forever." Apparently, the Guardian is lonely; it's been waiting a *very* long time to talk.

That's the only real way to explain what happens next. For all its high-falutin' language—as always, Spock's reactions are hilarious—you can't help but get a picture of some nerdy guy in a basement desperately trying to impress his new friends. If he's supposed to be "guarding" anything, he does a piss poor job of it; within seconds, he's showing off reruns of human history (all black and white) and bragging about his abilities. In effect, the Guardian's eagerness to please nearly destroys the universe. Although I guess to him, it's not so much a big deal, since when McCoy goes through the gate and the Enterprise winks out of existence, it's not like anything's changed much for Magic Voice.

So we've got our time jumping premise; it's nice how McCoy's tampering just confirms the theories put forth in "Tomorrow Is Yesterday," and there are some good touches here (I like that Kirk orders the rest of the crew to follow if he and Spock don't make it back okay). The planet itself is appropriately eerie, even though it doesn't look all that different from other planets we've seen. But we still don't have what makes this episode so memorable. We've got the threat—but for once, it's the resolution that's gonna blow our minds.

*Trek* has flirted with sadness often enough, and we've talked about how the show's darkness is one of the things that makes it so memorable. But for all that, the good guys win out in the end by doing the right thing, and that right thing is always fairly easy to spot. We feel bad for the salt vampire, but when it comes down to it, we're not gonna have too many sleepless nights over killing the thing. Had to be done, y'know? Us or them. And hell, it was a freakin' monster for all that.

As monsters go, Edith Keeler is something new. She's a dedicated pacifist who runs a homeless shelter and befriends Kirk and Spock; she preaches forward thinking, compassion, and has an unusually prophetic idea of the future of space travel. She's a great judge of character as well, filling the "Captain" in at the end of Spock's sentences and sensing that he and Kirk belong someplace else. Joan Collins is an odd choice for the role (casting Edith as a glamor girl seems to be missing the point), but after a few minutes, it makes enough sense. Maybe she comes from a wealthy family, and she's trying to find her own place in the world. Whatever the reason, she's unquestionably a good person, and when Kirk says

he loves her, it seems... *appropriate*.

But Edith has to die. Spock manages to cobble together a computer (bitching all the while) and finds out that before McCoy came into the past—in a clever touch, he finds this out before McCoy's actually arrived, so we're essentially waiting on something that, for us, has already happened—Edith was killed in a traffic accident. Somehow McCoy saved her, and in the upcoming years, Edith's speeches about pacifism would gain more and more followers, until she'd eventually meet with President Roosevelt himself; and because of her counsel, America would delay its entrance into the second World War just long enough for Germany to develop the A-bomb. (She'd have to be one hell of a convincing speaker to calm the US down after Pearl Harbor.)

For all the trappings, that's what this boils down to: either a good woman dies, or the universe does. Heavy stuff. Add to that Kirk's growing romantic attachment, and the decision becomes nearly impossible. There's a great moment, once Spock and Kirk have determined what the problem is, when Kirk catches Edith before she can fall down the stairs. It's a purely reflexive action, but in order to save everything he's ever known, he can't ever do that again. He has to sacrifice what's important to him, and what's more, he has to do it by going against everything he's ever been taught about what makes a good person. And in the end, when he does the right thing, his only consolation is that the universe goes back to being what it was before, and he gets to spend the rest of his life believing himself a murderer. Sure, a murderer for all the right reasons, but I doubt that makes it better.

Ellison's original script has a final scene between Spock and Kirk where Spock tries to comfort Kirk about what happened; it's not a bad scene, and it's got some good lines, but for my money, nothing beats Kirk's "Let's get the hell out of here," that concludes the aired version. There's no attempt to mollify anything, or put a jokey spin on it. It's just brutal.

It seems like "City" really should be the last episode of the first season, and if *Trek* was being made today, there's every chance it would've been. But it ain't; instead, we've got the whimsically titled "Operation—Annihilate!" to bring down the curtains. That might for the best, honestly. "Annihilate!" is a little rocky in places, but it's got a freaky looking threat, some enjoyable theatrics, and Nimoy turned up to a level we haven't seen since "The Naked Time." In a way, it's more representative of classic *Trek* than "City"; the latter is grand tragedy, while the former is a scrappy sci-fi pic that gets in and gets the job done without bogging down in the philosophical.

The Enterprise is tracking a plague of madness that seems to be moving through space from one planet to the next. Deneva is next, and Uhura hasn't been able to make contact with the inhabitants. Just as our heroes enter the system, they spot a Denevan ship making a beeline for the sun. Before they can get close enough to hit the ship with a tractor beam, it's destroyed. And if that wasn't weird enough, Uhura finally gets a message through the communicator—and it's a desperate plea from a woman Kirk recognizes as his sister-in-law, who lives with his brother on Deneva.

"Annihilate" often feels like a bunch of ideas tossed together till there was enough of them to fill the time. It's not disjointed, exactly, but there's enough here to take up half a dozen shows. Like Kirk's brother, Sam. When Kirk and his team beam down to the planet, they're assaulted by a mob bearing glass clubs. Phaser fire takes down the crowd fast enough, but there's still a mystery to be unravelled; a mystery that takes a bad turn when Kirk finds Aurelan, his sister-in-law, shrieking, while the bodies of her husband and her son lie nearby. The son, Peter, is still breathing, but Sam is dead—there's an inadvertently hilarious shot of Shatner lying on the floor wearing a moustache, as though the director wasn't convinced we'd believe Kirk and the dead man were related unless they looked almost exactly alike.

The quick exit of Sam seems like a lot of wasted opportunity. I'm not a huge fan of troubled family dynamics on genre shows, but seeing such a potentially important character tossed out like tomorrow's fish and chip paper is disconcerting. In fact, the whole personal connection seems wasted here. Aurelan and Peter are brought back to the Enterprise; both are infected by what we'll soon learn is this ep's major threat, an organic pancake, plastic-vomit looking thing that's never given a name. (I'm sure they have an official name in the *Trek*-verse, but I liked to think of them as the Wads.) A lot of kvetching is done over the possibility that Kirk might have to execute his nephew—along with everyone else on Deneva—to keep the Wads from spreading, but as a dramatic touchstone, it's not all that effective. Peter never says anything, so we don't care what happens to him; the familial stuff seems more like a desperate, and unneeded, attempt to

inject pathos.

Why unneeded? Well, for one, killing a million people is always going to sting, regardless of how many of them are on your Christmas list. For another, and here's the biggie, Spock manages to get himself infected during the landing party's first confrontation with the creatures (notice how it gets tendrils all through his body without damaging his uniform?). Screw the nephew, it's Spock we don't want to see get dead. Not that they'd kill him, but there's more than enough emotion in Spock's struggles against the incredible amounts of pain the Wads use to control their victims. The rest seems needlessly coincidental and not all that interesting.

After Spock overcomes the initial attempts at mind control (fun fight on the bridge, with yet another incredibly obvious double for Kirk), he manages to get a specimen of the alien back to the Enterprise for study. The things are single cell beasts that resemble brain cells; all together, they make one really big creature that goes all face hugger on people (okay, "whatever it can reach" hugger) and uses them as puppets. (Wonder if Heinlen ever saw this?) The things are from another galaxy with different physical properties from our own, which makes it kind of weird that they can latch onto humans so readily, but more importantly, it also makes them very difficult to kill through conventional means. This is where the whole "we may have to get rid of everybody on the planet" thing comes up, since the Wads are hellbent on expanding their empire, and without an effective way to stop them and save the lives of the already infected, Kirk may have to go to extremes. (Hey, either he's wrong or he's totally right every time.)

Thankfully, it doesn't come down to that. After banging their heads against the wall for a good twenty minutes, Kirk and the rest eventually realize that the aliens can be defeated through exposure to light. And after blinding Spock with the light of a million candles, they realize that they don't need the full spectrum to win—just one part, that humans can't even see. So it's very sad for Spock, especially since if they'd just waited ten minutes for the test results to come back on the original trial, they could've cured him without breaking his eyes. (I call it "the *Mist* fallacy.")

It's funny how much emo they wring out of Spock's dilemma here; he comes out of the test chamber and, after declaring himself cured, immediately walks into a table, as though bumping into furniture is the actual proof of blindness, and not the, y'know, being blind part. McCoy is effusively apologetic, and everybody's all messed up inside, but wouldn't you know it, it turns out okay in the end. Spock has an extra eyelid! That he forgot about. It protected his vision, so the blindness was only temporary.

"Annihilate!" falls apart if you think about it too long (every time I write the title, I kind of wish I was talking about a musical); the whole scheme of setting up satellites around Deneva to hit the planet with the killing light doesn't work at all. But it moves at a good clip, and it makes a nice palate cleanser after "City." You could say of all the things we've learned through the first season of *Star Trek*, maybe the most important is, sometimes plot holes aren't so bad after all. Better if you can avoid 'em, sure, but if that's not possible, move as quickly as possible, give us some great Kirk/Spock chats, and don't spare the goofy looking beasts.

And that's that.

So...anybody ready for season 2?

**Grades:**

**"City On The Edge Of Forever": A**

**"Operation—Annihilate!": B+**

**Stray Observations:**

- Kirk explains Spock's ears as the unfortunately result of an accident with a "mechanical rice-picker." Hilarious!
- After McCoy arrives in the past, a bum grabs his phaser and manages to blow himself up. You'd think that would be harder to do.

- After they kill their first alien in "Annihilate!," one of the crew members observes, "Captain, it doesn't look real!" Early meta?

## DISCUSSION

- Community (160)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [ChicJanowicz](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 10:42am

The poor doomed bum

What if it turned out that the death-by-phaser of the guy in the alley was the reason things went wrong? Maybe he later drank some tainted rum and kept it from getting to Eisenhower, or something...

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 11:04am

Good thing Spock was able to make the computer that acted like a magic ball, so they could pinpoint where the timelines diverged! A device that was difficult but not impossible to build with 1930s technology, and yet one that we never see or hear about in any form in any other Trek episode ever again. I call shenanigans.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 11:17am

I justified it through the tricorder; the machine Spock built wasn't actually reading history, but arranging the data that the tricorder had already recorded through the portal. Still a little dicey that he managed to get both versions of history at once, but much easier to swallow than "magic computer!" time.

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 11:21am

Ah yes - that makes sense now - I haven't seen this episode in too many years (decades?)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 11:47am

I'm with Zack on this one, I thought he was playing back recordings... "Stone knives and bear-skins!"

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 12:14pm

"I am endeavoring to construct a mnemonic circuit, using stone knives and bearskins" - Priceless. :)

The problem w/Ellison's original script, powerful as it was, was that it no way no how fit into the TREK Universe. He has that same unfortunate habit in almost every bit of episodic television he's ever written - while there are glittering great ideas and sharply literary dialogue, there is also an almost compulsive need on Ellison's part to napalm series themes, character arcs and continuity. It's like he was engaged in some jihad against series television....

As a short story writer and entertainment columnist (and with caveats, as a television and movie screenwriter), I think Harlan Ellison is brilliant. OTOH, he is also a compulsive naysayer, a loudmouthed bully and a misogynistic pig - and age has not mellowed him, but made him more desperate than ever to be noticed, I think.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 12:22pm

Needles and sutures... needles and sutures!

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 2:57pm

There are so many hard-to-swallow moments in City — even for a Star Trek episode — that I tend to not regard it as one of the series' greatest moments, as so many others do.

- The crazification of McCoy (as Zack has already criticized)
- The perfect timing of the jumping through the gate
- The fact that jumping through the time gate at slightly different times will still put you in the same city
- The Guardian's strange, inconsistent, very human personality
- The certainty that this one person is so pivotal to American history — shit ain't really like that
- McCoy's miraculous recovery, and the timing thereof

I know, it's Star Trek, you're supposed to overlook these things. But it just didn't work for me. I think there was about 30 minutes of very contrived nonsense in order to arrive at a great, memorable ending — which I have no doubt was the first thing conceived about this story.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 4:24pm

Speaking as someone who was a bit of an Ellison zombie as a teenager,\* drdarkeny has summed it up perfectly.

\*The only appropriate time to be one; being one as an adult is kind of pathetic.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 5:10pm

Gleeth, the point of the show was that maybe time isn't a linear, mechanical function. Maybe there are events and locations that form "eddies" in the flow of time, as Spock puts it, which is why they all seem to flow to the same point. I know that's not a scientific explanation, but to me that was one of the ideas behind this ep, and it's an interesting one to contemplate at that.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)ChicJanowicz

4/24/09 6:28pm

Yeah, I guess so. Just didn't really work for me though, because of the way the story was told. The opening with McCoy going bonkos feels so much different than the sequences with Kirk and Spock in the 1930s. Reminds me of the Simpsons, the whole red-herring first act plot device.

[Reply](#)

- [humanist](#)ChicJanowicz

4/25/09 7:34pm

Gleeth, all those points seem pretty easy to get over. especially the "one person is pivotal" concept, which is an extremely standard, one might say canonical, idea of fiction, and known to chaoticians everywhere as "the butterfly effect."

what bothers you about mccoys recovery? i mean, the drug wore off... weren't we all expecting that? was there anything at all remarkable about the timing? the bigger problem was the timing of his going crazy in the first place, but hey, coincidences happen.

the guardian was indeed strange, in a typically 60s way. oh well.

as for the mechanics of gate-jumping, i believe they addressed those points quite explicitly in the episode, if you'll remember. they all rode a particular "current" in the "ripples" of time.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)ChicJanowicz

4/26/09 12:16am

The Guardian is basically Mr. Atoz and his time library, huh? Without those cool viewer discs...

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)ChicJanowicz

4/26/09 2:39am

Um, why would an alien on another planet be showing them human history?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)ChicJanowicz

4/26/09 11:28am

Same reason everyone speaks English throughout the galaxy.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)ChicJanowicz

4/26/09 2:20pm

"Speaking as someone who was a bit of an Ellison zombie as a teenager,\* drdarkeny has summed it up perfectly.

\*The only appropriate time to be one; being one as an adult is kind of pathetic. "

Is it okay to still be one in college? My zombification began when I was in 10th grade and ended when I was around 22—oddly enough, just as I began to read Philip K. Dick.

I still have a fondness for HE, though. But I gotta say, when I read his script to "City" I found very little in it to like. The filmed ep is an improvement in every way.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)ChicJanowicz

4/27/09 6:36am

It's a mug's game to judge an artist by his personality, anyway. A lot of great talents are horrible people. By that standard, Ellison isn't so bad a person (one could argue he's not that great a talent but I liked him enough when I was younger so I wouldn't join in).

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)ChicJanowicz

4/27/09 12:00pm

Getting away from the precise degree of Ellison's prickishness, the recordings that Spock uses to figure out where it all went wrong seem to me to be the biggest plot hole in this episode. If I remember correctly, the images on the Guardian stop after McCoy goes through. Then Kirk and Spock jump through to an earlier point than McCoy. So there's no way that they have recordings of anything that happened AFTER McCoy's arrival. Yet the whole episode is based on the knowledge of what happens after McCoy gets there. Am I missing something here?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)ChicJanowicz

4/28/09 11:46am



Alurin:

I'm going from memory here too, but it seems to me that they had to wait for the images to cycle around, right? So there must have been some sort of a continuum, therefore a before and an after...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)ChicJanowicz

4/28/09 1:59pm

Hi Richelieu!

CBS.comNope. I just went to to refresh my failing memories. The tape stops rolling when McCoy jumps through, then the Guardian restarts it from the beginning for Kirk and Spock. So there's no possible way for Spock's tricorder to have picked up images from AFTER McCoy's jump.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)ChicJanowicz

5/01/09 11:10pm

Ok, I defer to your more recent knowledge...

And HI! right back at ya!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Gleeth Yurnix

6/20/14 9:07am

More than half your objections are answered in the episode, or you're simply drawing incorrect conclusions.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [bradley](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 3:35pm

Hey

How come there ain't no Puerto Ricans on STAR TREK?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)bradley

4/24/09 5:13pm

Sure, there's puerto Ricans in Star trek, but they're ususally red-shirts.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)bradley

4/24/09 6:38pm

B'lanna Torres! She's a Puerto Klingon.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)bradley

4/24/09 7:09pm

There aren't any Puerto Ricans in the future. They went extinct. Just like the humpback whales.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)bradley

4/24/09 7:43pm

Puerto Rico was destroyed by the Xindi. So the only Puerto Ricans left were the 10 million still living in New New York.

[Reply](#)

- [kebabsbradley](#)

4/24/09 7:58pm

How can you be so quiet when your parades are so loud?

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Shanklybradley](#)

4/25/09 12:03am

Christ, Herpes. Don't ever remind us about the Xindi, ok?

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Shanklybradley](#)

4/25/09 12:07am

Damnit, now I can't stop thinking about them. Remember how Enterprise dragged out the time war thing for a few seasons, then suddenly decided no one gave a shit about it, so all of the sudden the bad guys were the Xindi. But then, The Xindi aren't one alien race, but like five. And all of them suck and are stupid. And then they NEVER REVEAL ANYTHING ABOUT THE GUY FROM THE FUTURE THAT WAS THE CENTRAL MYSTERY OF THE FUCKING SHOW. And not because they ran out of time, but because they just didn't bother. And if you ask them who it was, they admit that they never even thought about it much. ENTERPRISE, I HATE YOU!!!!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrbradley](#)

4/25/09 3:31am

Ok, I'll say it.

Except for that damn theme song, I quite like Enterprise. And by itself, that Xindi arc is damn fine.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractingbradley](#)

4/25/09 12:42pm

Definitely second the Xindi love. That whole season was some of the most creative Trek storytelling ever. I thought having 6 Xindi species was a really inventive and fascinating concept. It's the kind of what-if imagination that has always made Trek stand out.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrbradley](#)

4/25/09 11:40pm

Thanks for the back-up Tinsel. I thought I'd be all alone in this, but as it is you're there and the expected flames never came...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractingbradley](#)

4/26/09 12:33am

The aliens of late Trek really explored some fascinating scientific/anthropological concepts: the expanded Borg (with or without a queen), the 6 Xindi, Species 8472 and fluidic space, the Tholians of Enterprise, Ferenghi, Cardassians... I even dug the Odo people. I Don't read fanfic but a Xindi series would be amazing.

[Reply](#)

- [playmusicsbradley](#)

4/26/09 2:56pm

Every race and life form all over the galaxy and no Puerto Ricans?!

Season 2, please!

[Reply](#)

- [alurinbradley](#)

4/27/09 11:53am

Why should there be Puerto Ricans when there are no Brazilians or Indonesians?

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbombradley](#)

4/27/09 5:17pm

or polacks.

[Reply](#)

- [alurinbradley](#)

4/28/09 2:03pm

presumably they were all destroyed in the eugenics wars, leaving only Americans and Frenchmen.

[Reply](#)

- [Placenta Juan the Afterbirth Tbradley](#)

2/02/10 1:03pm

Because they aren't working in the future either.

I can't believe nobody here had heard that joke before. It's like the chicken/road of racist jokes.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [mmyZack Handlen](#)

4/24/09 10:02am

Ellison's script

Haven't read it. How altered was it, beyond the McCoy change?

[Reply](#)

- [ChicJanowiczmmy](#)

4/24/09 10:52am

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

[Reply](#)

- [blasmommy](#)

4/24/09 11:10am

I've also heard that Ellison originally wanted Kirk to try and stop the truck, to save Edith, but was himself stopped. The idea here was that Kirk was so in love he was perfectly willing to sacrifice the future for it. Roddenberry said that he thought this would make Kirk untrustworthy to the audience, so that disappeared. I didn't see this in the wiki article, but I believe I remember it from a Trek documentary about the show.

And while history shows her influence would probably have waned after Pearl Harbor, there were plenty of America First fanatics and xenophobes who wanted to make America a fascist playground at the time.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefellermmy](#)

4/24/09 12:14pm

It's surprising how conservative the politics can be in the original series, especially since the movies (I'm looking at you, #4) and TNG became so liberal and politically correct. We've already had a couple of episodes that serve as cold war

analogies (and Kirk even commits an act of war in "Balance of Terror"), and now we've got an anti-peace activist message. and we haven't even gotten to the not so subtly veiled Vietnam episode "A Private little War"

[Reply](#)

- [billyveronammy](#)

4/24/09 1:28pm

It could be conservative at times, but it was a very odd - unrecognizable by today's meanings even - sort of conservatism. Very in favor of diversity, usually non-violent, but always very pro-American, seeing America as the birthplace of these ideals, therefore American (i.e. Federation) violence was usually ok as it was always in service of those ideals.

It always had a lot in common with Heinlein, who threw a strong dose of libertarianism in there to boot. Today, I say I am somewhere to the left of Castro but it's a lot more confused than that and Heinlein and Star Trek being such a big part of my early exposure to politics is probably why.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)mmmy

4/24/09 1:34pm

"A Private Little War" wasn't veiled at all.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)mmmy

4/24/09 2:02pm

re the veiled vietnam reference comment, that was sarcasm - surely you've encountered it here before!

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)mmmy

4/24/09 5:13pm

eh, weak sarcasm.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)mmmy

4/24/09 7:33pm

Just like his script for the Derek Flint sequel, his stuff generally lacks simple human emotion and feeling, and goes instead for the "grand idea," which is supposed to wow everybody.

[Reply](#)

- [Necron-99](#)mmmy

4/24/09 10:17pm

DarbyOFakename & hercules rockefeller—you fellas should arm wrestle.

Gentle Herpes—Haven't read the Flint, but have read a lot of Ellison. Loved him a lot, taught me some things—but I came to see him as a one trick pony—great at that trick, but once you'd read even 8 or 10 stories, you could pretty much see where the rest were headed—cynicism, despair, tragedy, hypocrisy & irony. Mild profanity (or not so mild in the essays)—heady stuff when you're 14 and you're used to children's media that had no sex or violence.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)mmmy

4/25/09 9:19pm

Conspiracy theories aside, I think FDR could have averted Pearl Harbor if he'd sold oil to Japan, been more quiet about China, and kept the U.S. navy in port in the continental U.S. Therefore, delaying our entry into the war isn't that big a stretch.

That the world would have gone to hell as a result isn't much of a stretch either.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)mmmy

4/26/09 2:32am

Every time I saw this ep in syndication, they simply cut the beginning aboard the Enterprise. Up til recently, I thought the ep began on the planet.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)mmmy

4/27/09 10:43am

Hercules, billyverona: I don't think the politics were conservative in any meaningful sense. It's just that they weren't leftist, or hippie. Note that even The Way To Eden veers between criticism of and sympathy for hippies. Roddenberry's politics in the mid 60s seem to be pure Cold War liberal. These were the guys who desegregated the schools AND started Vietnam, and saw no contradiction. It's only from a "presentist" perspective that we see some of this as "conservative", and that's a result of the clashes of the late 60s, which were still to come. Or at least just getting started.

Later, of course, Roddenberry starts drinking the hippie juice, and we get TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)mmmy

4/27/09 7:12pm

Well, that's why the real time traveler came back and killed Huey Long. Too late to be an isolationist after 1913.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Bob K

6/20/14 9:15am

Interesting points. Zack's bizarre, off the cuff claim about Pearl Harbor doesn't make much sense.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)hercules rockefeller

6/20/14 9:25am

There's no Kirk act of war in Balance. Pursuing and destroying a ship that just killed three hundred or so civilians in the process of committing an act of war against your people and territory is not in turn an act of war. Iirc the Romulan ship is still in Fed territory when it's destroyed, making the situation all the clearer.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 10:33am

Bring on Season 2

I certainly hope this column keeps going for the final two seasons. Well, at least the 2nd season. The third does get a bit more silly as the end approaches.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 11:57am

The third season does get a bit silly with their supposed loss of budget, etc., but it still has The Enterprise Incident, The Tholian Web, Day of the Dove, Whom Gods Destroy, All Our Yesterdays and few other halfway decent episodes.

It's not all shit is what I'm saying.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 12:10pm

Bring it on, Handlen!

The "Star Trek" TV Club has rapidly jumped to the top of my must-read list on the AV Club.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 12:22pm

Definitely looking forward to season two, starting with one of my favorites - "Amok Time". Not to mention tribbles, "4,000 quatloos on the newcomer", Kirk and Spock in Zoot suits pretending to be gangsters... plenty to look forward to.

[Reply](#)

- [CrazyBlend](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 12:31pm

Please continue these reviews through the rest of the series! I love them!

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 1:17pm

Yeah, I don't know if your question at the end there is rhetorical, Zack, but please, please cover season 2 and 3. These write-ups are great.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 1:29pm

... and "The Trouble With Tribbles," my life long love of which continues to pay off dividends in a very real way!

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 1:33pm

Holy shit, the zoot suits! And Fizbee! All this makes me remember why I hearted Star Trek so much as a dweeby little kid.

But yeah, both of the eps are great. I've always been a fan of Operation - Annihilate, and City stands as one of the best Trek eps ever.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 1:35pm

one of my current faves as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 2:26pm

I'm throwing my support behind the continuation of the writeups, too. I, too, had the first season set forever, but had never gone through it until now. I'm hoping to continue with the last two seasons, TVClubbing all the way through.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Right Wingnut

4/24/09 3:29pm

Thank god for some Tribble love. Seems so trendy to hate on it sometimes.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Right Wingnut

4/26/09 2:36am

And why not the Animated Star Trek ep where instead of breeding, the tribbles just grow REALLY big. I still remember this exchange when the Klingons attack:

SPOCK: We could always throw tribbles at them.

KIRK: I thought Vulcans didn't have a sense of humor.

SPOCK: We don't.

And finally, Scottie: And we can be sure all their tribbles will be little ones.

Damn, I gotta find a dvd of the Animated Series.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

4/28/09 11:45am

TAS is really worth it. For some reason, even though I loved it as a kid, I had it labeled as real crap in my mind, but there are some really good stories there, even if they do have to get the job done in 30m....

I'd love to see what they could do today.. In many ways, I think ST:TAS was trying things that couldn't be done in live action before the advent of CGI...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 9:57am

Spock's Ears

Usually when on undeveloped planets Spock wears a hat. I think this is the first time it's explained to the people on a planet as an industrial accident or something similar.

I always wondered why they didn't just do that every time they went to past Earth or Nazi Planet land or any of those.

[Reply](#)

- [adept42](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 11:37am

Spock's ears are still partially visible with his hat on, and they still look weird. Also, the eyebrows & eyeshadow look a bit out of place for a 30s bum. But accepting that he can blend in is far from the episode's biggest stretch, so why get nit-picky?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 11:44am

I agree: I thought that was just brilliant as a kid, laughed my ass off, repeated it all the time... Today I find it a bit twee, but I still have affection for it...

And yes, Season 2!

[Reply](#)

- [Poor Poor Bob](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 11:52am

If memory serves, Spock spent all but about 10 minutes of the episode holed up in the cheap apartment he shared with his hetero life mate.

That did a lot more to protect his identity (and give him a freaky Howard Hughes recluse vibe) than the hats and ear stories.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 11:56am

They did something similar on DEEP SPACE NINE when Chief O'Brien and Major Kira had to time-travel to Earth to bring Sisko, Dax and Bashir - along with their entire Universe - back. Kira kept getting all defensive and irritated when O'Brien recommended she either put on a bandage to cover her Bajoran nose ridges or come up with an explanation to explain them, saying "I don't have to explain how I look to anybody!" Then the first time some human from the past stared at her, she rubbed her nose and embarrassedly muttered something about "Broke my nose...." I Heart Kira Nerys, the same way I heart CASTLE's Kate Beckett and J.D. Robb's Eve Dallas.

Anybody know what happened to Nana Visitor after she and Alexander Siddig's marriage broke up...?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 12:11pm

I think she was in Dark Angel and played Jason's mom in that new Friday 13th from a while back. Yikes.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 12:39pm

She did a guest spot as a cancer patient on a couple of BSG episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 12:50pm

You're leaving out my favorite part of the explanation for Spock's ears - how Kirk's friend is "obviously Chinese," hence the rice-picker. Classic.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Nerd Paragon

4/24/09 7:23pm

I knew a girl a while back who, if she were to put on the same costume with the nose ridges and everything, would have looked exactly like Visitor.

I know you were as thrilled by that story as I was telling it.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Nerd Paragon

4/26/09 4:44pm

at the risk of alerting the trolls, i just want to say how refreshing it is that someone could use the word "first" in the first post without it being assholeish OR provoking a bunch of reflexively bitter cancerAIDSebola shit. does this mean AVClubbers are growing up or just that our little subset of trekker nerds is more interested in talking about the show than internet dynamics?

and, fuck yeah, dude: bring on season two. you're doing awesome work, man.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Nerd Paragon

4/28/09 11:42am

I hadn't noticed the first thing, which is a first in and of itself, i suppose...

As for the lack of negativity, I don't know if has to do with SF geekiness or not, but I do recognize a lot of names here from among other things the Battlestar Galactica lists and they were always (almost!) polite, intelligent and feisty as hell...



[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Nerd Paragon

6/20/14 9:26am

Because they'd have to continually stop and answer questions, or draw unwanted attention while posing as German soldiers?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 1:31pm

Is Ellison any good?

I'm only familiar with Harlan Ellison the sore-headed old crank and most litigious man in America, but not the writer. I've seen the episode of "The Outer Limits" that he wrote and then sued James Cameron over claiming he stole the story for "The Terminator" (which is pretty much bullshit, btw). But I've never read any of his short stories. So, are they worth checking out? Does he live up to the hype? Recommendations?

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 2:34pm

I smell a "Gatewats to Geekery"/"Primer"...

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 2:36pm

I'm kind of in the same boat—I know the name, and some of the work, but not really. Do I smell a Gateways To Geekrey/Primer?...

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 5:19pm

He's OK. Not as good as he would have you believe, but far from the worst sf/fantasy writer of the time.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 6:38pm

"Repent Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman" owns, motherfuckers.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 7:39pm

He was a writer of his time who worked with the same stuff his peers did, more or less successfully. He was less pulpy than somebody like Philip K. Dick, but he was also less "fun?"

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 9:32pm

"Dangerous Visions" and "Again, Dangerous Visions" are two of the greatest SF short story collections EVER, edited by Ellison. He wrote the introductions, and the project was all his.

"A path-breaking collection, Dangerous Visions helped define the New Wave science fiction movement, particularly in its depiction of sex in science fiction. Writer/editor Al Sarrantonio[1] writes how Dangerous Visions "almost single-handedly [...] changed the way readers thought about science fiction."

The list of the authors' names reads like a Who's Who of 1960s science fiction. Ellison introduced the anthology both collectively and individually while authors provided afterwords to their own stories.

"

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 9:50pm

Some of Ellison's fiction from the '60s and '70s read of their time (as does the majority of work from most great or great-ish writers), though he was always an original and an innovator, and I, personally, if pressed, prefer his non-fiction essays editorials, etc.

But read the novella Mefisto in Onyx (written in the early '90s and included in the collection Slip page) to see a storytelling master at work. It's a stunner even on a third or fourth read.

(That said, the Gene Coon/D.C. Fontana rewrite of "City" was a better script, generally, and a better Star Trek script, specifically, than Mr. Ellison's admittedly terrific original drafts.)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Breakfast Balls

4/25/09 12:25am

I picked up "Angry Candy," largely on the basis of Ellison's rep from this episode. It was decent, and I think the 'more sophisticated but less fun' Phillip Dick is a pretty accurate assesment.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Breakfast Balls

4/25/09 7:00am

That's a good point- the essays I've read by him were more memorable and interesting than his fiction.

I have "Again, Dangerous Visions"- haven't yet found the first one.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Breakfast Balls

4/26/09 2:46am

I'm still looking for The Last Dangerous Visions— why can't I find it?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Raymond Luxury-Yacht](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 10:02am

Thank you very much

Great review of "City". Is there an emo band called "Edith Keeler Must Die" yet?

[Reply](#)

- [Towelie McTowelson](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 10:59am

I don't watch much Star Trek but City On The Edge Of Forever is a pretty fucking incredible episode.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 12:55pm

There's a punk band called No Kill I.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 1:37pm

"Let's get the hell out of here" is definitely the best ending. No glossing over what happened, no laughter on the bridge. It's just cold.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 2:54pm

How about Edith Keeler Must Die(t)?

See what I did there?

[Reply](#)

- [disruptive pantsuit](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 3:00pm

I grew up with Star Trek (AGING HIPSTER DOUCHEBAG ALERT!) and it has aged really horribly in the intervening years... but the look on Shatner's face after he's stopped McCoy, with his eyes absolutely screwed shut until the eyelashes are almost invisible... coupled with that last line... that was the finest moment in the whole series.

In fact, in terms of pure drama, the only real challenger would be when Spock actually dies (after his cheesy final "Live Long and Prosper" line) in Wrath of Khan - a moment when Shatner utterly fails to overact, which is a magnificent impossibility in and of itself.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 3:27pm

My taste for TOS has come and gone over the years. Since I'm in my 4th decade of Trekdom (Trekhood?), I decided I just have to embrace all of 'em on their own terms.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 4:16pm

"it has aged really horribly in the intervening years..."

Nowhere near as badly as TNG has.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/24/09 7:27pm

Oh, the TNG is really horrible in spots, particularly the first few seasons where Roddenberry essentially vetoed all conflict among the Enterprise crew because humanity had "grown out of it."

Didn't Roddenberry have some strong association with L.R. Hubbard and all those freaks from the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena? I thought I remembered reading that somewhere.

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)Raymond Luxury-Yacht

4/26/09 6:33am

\*Harlan Ellison walks out\*

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bdisruptive pantsuit

6/20/14 9:13am

Funny, as I hadn't watched TOS in twenty years and was amazed at how well the best episodes hold up. About one in six are still remarkably good television, without caveats (unless you're the sort that can't go to theater because it doesn't look 'real'), pretty much as good as it gets in terms of scripts and acting, and the next sextile remain extremely engaging. So who knows what you're seeing when the screen's on.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cmndr\\_X](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 11:10am

Though I'd take anything Ellison says with a large grain of salt.

A very, very huge grain of salt, since his "this really happened behind the scenes" stories tend to be less than convincing, especially in re: City on the Edge of Forever.

Especially since he's recently decided to do another nuisance lawsuit against Paramount and the WGA over "City" ie Paramount has ripped him off! and the WGA didn't properly represent poor widdle Harlan.

Of course the WGA doesn't even agree with Ellison and other writers who worked on Star Trek and actually worked consistently in movies and TV don't seem to have this problem with a piece of work-for-hire they did a loooooooooong time ago. Then again, none of them have been metaphorically "dining out" on the story of writing that episode and getting like totally screwed by Rodenberry and the rest for like forty damn years.

But that's all he's done for years now, suing people for ridiculous crap, living off of past "glories" and telling These Kids Today how they're immoral and their crazy newfangled lifestyles with their "video games" and crazy music are hollow. His Angry Man stage act has way surpassed his abilities and talents, and...there's really nothing left but anger and self-aggrandizement.

[Reply](#)

- [Raymond Luxury-Yacht](#)Cmndr\_X

4/24/09 11:39am

Harlan Ellison is actually suing the A.V. Club right now for this unauthorized praise of his work.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Cmndr\_X

4/24/09 12:29pm

Was it some thing to do with writers of his generation maybe, Cmdr. X? Because Norman Mailer and Truman Capote certainly seemed to behave very much like that as they got older and less relevant - and over on the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America Forums, it seems like Ellison's asshole buddy Norman Spinrad is constantly raging on about one "earthshaking" issue or another.

It's that kind of White Male Sense of Entitlement that drove my wife nuts - and ultimately led to her resignation from SFWA....

[Reply](#)

- [Cmndr\\_X](#)Cmndr\_X

4/24/09 1:13pm

I honestly can't say for sure. Maybe Ellison has a particularly bad case of Short Man's Syndrome and his rage is fueled by having to 5'3 or whatever for his life.

The thing is I really can't stand Ellison. I hate him, it would be fair to say. His nuisance lawsuits are just one part of this, the way he pretty much nags and whips up enough negative PR to get his targets to settle out of court and then his hardcore idiot fans consider this a blow for justice.

[Reply](#)

- [Vladimir Pootin](#)Cmndr\_X

4/24/09 1:53pm

Ellison is notorious for holding grudges for years. As an example, a friend of mine met Ellison in a hotel bar years ago and without knowing who he was, got in some esoteric conversation about sci-fi authors that ended with them screaming at each other and getting kicked out.

Flash forward to years later when same friend found out Ellison was at the same convention we were and proceeds to call his room. My friend tells Ellison his name and reminds him of the incident which touches off a hissy fit of insults and random expletives. My friend would only have to interject something like "You're sure loud for a tiny, tiny man" to get a new screaming fit over the phone that everyone in the room could hear when the receiver was held up. The really funny bit was he never hung up! My friend had to after 15 minutes or so of us all laughing hysterically.

So say what you like about the man, his crazed tantrums did entertain me for a bit.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKedCmndr\\_X](#)

4/24/09 4:33pm

drdarkeny: Spinrad's an asshole too, now? That's really sad, I always used to like him. I've got to say, though, I haven't read or heard anything by or about him for many a year now.

Every time I hear (well, read) hints about what goes on on the SFWA private boards, I just feel relief at never having read any of that shit.

Afraid Newt Gingrich forever tainted the word "entitlement" for me, though. I'll be nodding in agreement with someone's online rant about bad fanboy attitudes, then the dreaded "e-word" will crop up, and I'll reflexively start backing off and getting all "hey, now, you're getting a bit too harsh..."

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizardCmndr\\_X](#)

4/24/09 6:31pm

I'll say this. If Ellison didn't have a beef with Nimoy then Nimoy must mother Mother freaking Theresa.

[Reply](#)

- [Expletive DeletedCmndr\\_X](#)

4/24/09 7:54pm

Ellison is essentially Ian Holmes portrayal of Napoleon from TIME BANDITS come to life.

"That's what I like: leetle things heeting each other!"

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)D.R. Darke

6/20/14 9:03am

Yeah. I mean, people of color, and women, never act like entitled assholes.

Fuck you, bigot.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 1:33pm

The Guardian Returns

The "Guardian of Forever" returns in the animated episode "Yesteryear." Anybody remember this? Spock has to go back to his past on Vulcan because after a routine trip through the Guardian, it turns out he doesn't exist in the "current" timeline. Oh noes!

Actually, it's a pretty fucking awesome episode — easily the best of the animated series — and even better in the Alan Dean Foster novelization.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 1:44pm

I liked those animated adventures. It let them build whatever kinds of planets/monsters they wanted. There was one where the crew was put in a zoo by telepathic elephant slugs. And one where Kirk (and Spock?) were recruited into kind of an A-Team, along with a huntress woman, a birdman, and some nebbishy little thief.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 5:18pm

If you liked the animated series, which — since they were only a half-hour — were really light on key plot points, you should totally dig up the novelizations. Probably the best of all written Trek fiction, and makes a big case for ST: TAS to be part of the canon.

You actually get backstory for all of these weird new aliens, as well as the cast members. It's like Alan Dean Foster treated the scripts as outlines, not as something to be turned directly into beat-by-beat stories as a money gig, like those godawful James Blish adaptations of TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 7:03pm

I also loved those animated series novelizations, and you may be happy to know that Alan Dean Foster wrote the novelization of the new Trek, which in turn has a few "Yesteryear"-like themes...

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 7:41pm

It shows up again in one of the novels, too, with Commander Data messing with it in some way after the Federation puts all kinds of security guards around it and stuff because it's so dangerous.

One of the more forgettable novels.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)barefoot jim

4/25/09 12:31am

There was one Star Trek novel where a bunch of super-evolved dinosaurs went to the Guardian of Forever and changed earth's history, so their kind never died out and mammals never took over. Kirk had to go back in time and lay down the law. It had a raptor shooting a phaser on the cover, or some such, and I remember getting it when I was ten, because it looked totally fuckin' sweet.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)barefoot jim

4/26/09 2:49am

Yeah, that sounds like a ten year old's wet dream.

But yeah, James Blish wrote the novelizations of the Animated AND the TNG series, and made even the dumbest of them great. Blish rocked.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)barefoot jim

4/27/09 10:59am

Quirk: You're wrong. As barefoot jim notes, Alan Dean Foster did the TAS novelizations, and they pwned Blish's half ass work on TOS. As they go one, they get more and more expansive. The first few pack three episodes per book, but I think the CounterClock Incident gets a whole novel to itself.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 1:01pm

The Scene w/ McCoy and the Hobo

When I first watched this episode, I always felt so sorry for that dude. He had no idea what in the hell was going on

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 1:10pm

Well, he \_was\_ a milk stealer...

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 1:23pm

I love that scene. The fact that McCoy is lying passed out on the ground while this guy just accidentally vaporizes himself makes it play like a rare moment of black comedy for TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 7:09pm

The Jefferson Starship song-title crack made my day. Thanks, Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)barefoot jim

4/24/09 7:37pm

He was a 49'er who fell down the shaft.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)barefoot jim

4/25/09 1:07pm

Good call, GH. I never thought about how similar "Time's Arrow" was to this. Drunken bums must always be sitting near eddies in the space-time continuum or something. Too bad the rest of the world will never believe their stories.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)barefoot jim

4/27/09 5:10pm

and don't forget that hobo-lookin' dumptruck driver who runs off after seeing ahnuld appear in The Terminator - you just know he got dismissed as a rummy whenever he told that story.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

4/28/09 11:51am

udji,

Shit I was thinking about that guy in terminator.. Good call!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 11:43am

Sketchy

Great to read your comments, as ever, Zach, and thanks for taking us through this first season...

I feel somehow disappointed by the 'Forever' review, however. it seems a bit sketchy, as if something's been left out. I know it's necessary and logical to presume that we've all seen these episodes at least once, yet you spend not much time on the actual plot...

Maybe it's just me (an I'm not just saying that), but it seems that in not totally ceding to your desire to write about the Ellison kerfuffle you end up with the 'ass between two chairs' as we say in French...

OK, this has been 'Bitchy Minute with Richelieu'....

Over and out.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

4/24/09 1:00pm

I get what you're saying, tho Zach did have a lot of ground to cover, esp w/two eps to review. I appreciated the background on the original script since I wouldn't research that myself, and maybe cuz the ep is soooooo famous he felt less need for a full plot recap.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

4/24/09 7:59pm

Richelieu - relax and have a beer. Also, watch "Caprica" and shuffle on over to that thread.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

4/25/09 3:19am

Ah Meyer,

Excellent advice indeed, but Caprica is not yet out here in France, and my girl would absolutely kill me if I bought an unsubtitled version to watch...

Aaarrgh!

Beer sounds good though, it's about breakfast time here!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

4/28/09 11:47am

It's a fair cop!

[Reply](#)

- [Vladimir Pootin](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 1:31pm

Murderers! Assassins!

For some reason my friends and I thought screaming that in the middle of a crowd was the height of hilarity.

Also, pick a random person, point at them and say, "YOU! What planet is this?"

I'm such a nerd.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Vladimir Pootin

4/24/09 6:58pm



Another good bit of nerd street theater is to stumble up to a random stranger and demand to know what year it is, looking anguished.

"2009...? Then... there's still time...!"

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Vladimir Pootin

4/24/09 7:11pm

And if you get bored with that you could always ask random passer-bies if they know where Sarah Connor lives.

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Shankly](#)Vladimir Pootin

4/25/09 12:01am

Everyone knows you don't just come right out and ask them the year. You ask the date, and when they answer, THEN you say, "WHAT YEAR?" Which they will seem confused by, but then answer and proceed to walk on, out of the story.

[Reply](#)

- [KROOZ](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 6:58pm

Puerto Ricans

Wasn't Commodore Mendez ('Menagerie I & II) Puerto Rican? He was cool.

Also: Zack, you're doing a great job on these. But please remember that 'its' possessive has no apostrophe.

[Reply](#)

- [simon](#)KROOZ

4/26/09 4:47am

Krooz, its not a big deal.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)KROOZ

4/27/09 7:22pm

B'Ellana Maria Torres

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)KROOZ

4/27/09 10:00pm

Joe "Jose" Tyler from "The Cage."

Observation: as conceived, Joe was the son of a Boston intellectual father and firey Latin mother. He was constantly battling his hot-tempered Latin blood. Lt. Torres, however, was the daughter of a milquetoast Latin father and a firrey Klingon mother who was constantly battling her hot-tempered Klingon blood.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 12:31pm

Man, he has to let his girl die and he loses his brother?

This is a bad week for Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/24/09 7:06pm

To lose his brother would be even worse.

"To Loose La Trek".

Umm...sorry.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

4/26/09 11:13pm

Hmmm. Gary Mitchell, his best friend before Spock, then Edith Keeler, his apparently most deeply felt love, and the Sam his brother Sam—kinda gives the lie to "Saavik was right, you never have faced death."

Oh well, it's only space opera.

[Reply](#)

- [Isaac Yankem DDS](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 10:03am

Who knew?

Unconscious Sulu's eyeshadow is gorgeous!

Let's see you beat that, Harold.

[Reply](#)

- [John Robie](#)Isaac Yankem DDS

4/24/09 10:18am

Harold has a cool fold-up sword.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Isaac Yankem DDS

4/28/09 11:43am

Why do 'eye shadow and 'fold-up swords' read as some strangely gay subtext here?

I feel like such an outsider (not for the first time)

[Reply](#)

- [Jason Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

1/13/14 6:55pm

As good as City is... and enjoyable... I'm surprised that it doesn't get knocked for being a little too unbelievable. I mean, the thought that Edith Keller would have been important enough to momentarily stop America from entering WWII, which would have altered the course of history, seems a little bit "much." And that that is the person they would just happen to run into... And then the fact that McCoy would just happen to show up in the same exact spot as Kirk and Spock, when they didn't have any idea if he would show up a month later, 6 months later... or whether he would turn up anywhere near where they happened to be... well, it's all a bit far-fetched. But despite all of that, it's still a very enjoyable episode. It really makes you wish it had been a 2 hour episode. There's probably even more they could have done with the idea... but then again, perhaps it was just right at the 1 hour length. Anyhow, great episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Jason Mucci

6/20/14 8:42am

Your objections are addressed in the script.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 1:27pm

drug dealer?

I haven't read Ellison's original teleplay, but I think it was a wise choice to have McCoy be the one that went crazy and

changed the future. It added a huge emotional element to Kirk and Spock's mission and allowed for that amazing scene where the three friends are suddenly reunited and then immediately stand and watch Edith die. The fact that Kirk was clearly struggling against every fiber of his being to prevent himself from saving her added more dimension to his character than anything until the end of "Wrath of Khan".

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Breakfast Balls

4/24/09 7:38pm

Spock also seems to be quite happy at that moment.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 12:13pm

Star Trek's "The City On The Edge Of Forever"...  
versus South Park's "City On The Edge Of Forever." Discuss.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)D.N. Nation

4/24/09 1:38pm

no.

[Reply](#)

- [DarbyOFakename](#)D.N. Nation

4/24/09 5:14pm

I said no. no means no.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen

4/26/09 10:10pm

Sometimes I go to extremes  
Does this mean that Billy Joel is hip now?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)alurin

4/26/09 11:50pm

Actually, Billy Joel himself no longer goes to extremes, as all he sees are Shades of Grey.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 8:41am

"Sure, a murderer for all the right reasons, but I doubt that makes it better. "

? It makes all the difference, of course.

"casting Edith as a glamor girl seems to be missing the point"

This makes no sense. Collins had done real acting before this. She had played a nun opposite Richard Burton. She wasn't a runway model.

"We've done time travel before, of course."

Of course? Once to this point, in Yesterday is Tomorrow. Twice, if you count the irrelevant three days back in Naked Time.

[Reply](#)

- [SlackerInc](#)Zack Handlen

12/26/15 11:32am

I love this episode: I would give it an A as well. But it's interesting that in this episode and then in the "whales movie", a new timeline is not created. But in the JJ Abrams reboot that is exactly what happens. Now, a lot of people would probably complain that this is an example of Abrams messing things up ; but I actually think a new timeline makes more sense.

Also, instead of just getting the hell out of there, shouldn't they have posted guards to keep others from wandering into the portal?

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 12:36pm

Shatner with a moustache?

i honestly never noticed that before. i'll have to try and catch that episode again.

not much i can say about City that hasn't been said, but i've always found Operation to be an interesting episode, because of Kirk being pretty much an asshole throughout, only this time without top secret ulterior motives (The Enterprise Incident) or through mind control/body switching/etc (Turnabout Intruder)

[Reply](#)

- [D H](#)Zack Handlen

4/02/16 9:28pm

I have never been able to find out who was the Asian woman who assist Sulu when he falls from his injuries on the bridge at the start of the show. Why isnt she listed in any of the credits? And I have searched many star trek and sites like IMBD .

[Reply](#)

- [Sir Poodlesnort](#)Zack Handlen

4/24/09 10:38am

Appropriatelyeerie

I learned a new word!

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Amok Time" / "Who Mourns For Adonais?"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published May 1, 2009

[Comments \(155\)](#)



And here we are at Season 2. Take a look around, get acquainted with the place—settle in for the long haul. Seems mostly the same, right? But there are some changes. DeForest Kelley now has a much deserved "Also Starring" credit in the opening titles, and the episode name gets listed along with the writer; which means for the first ep of the season, we know right away we're watching "Amok Time" by Theodore Sturgeon. (Whose name we haven't seen since "Shore Leave," for those keeping track.) There's even a brand new crewmember on the bridge, the horribly wigged Chekov (Walter Koenig).

Apart from that, though, things haven't changed much. It's the blessing and the curse of old school TV; without needing to maintain anything but the most minimum of continuities between episodes (same actors, same sets, same premise, and generally dead people don't come back), there's more of a week-to-week freedom to do whatever the hell you want. Provided you can wrap it up in fifty minutes and change, there aren't any real rules here. We're not building towards anything, we're not trying to tell one cohesive, season-long story. So have Scotty lusting after a random crewmember, or give Sulu a yen for biology—there's no worry about being part of a larger puzzle.

The problem is that when you spend this much time with the same characters, you want to know more about them; you've gotta have at least an illusion of a consistent backstory, even if it's not a persistent one. "Amok Time" is a terrific opening to the second season. It's got a great hook, solid acting all around, and some terrific twists. Maybe most important of all, it's also one of the first serious attempts to create a mythology for Spock. We've had bits and pieces of his past before—we know he's half-Vulcan, and that he may or may not have had a love affair with a human back at Starfleet Academy—but that past has never been the main focal point of an episode.

Hell, this is the first time in the series where the entire plot is generated by the history of a main character. We've had McCoy and Kirk and even Nurse Chapel interacting with old friends and lovers before, but in those cases, the relationships were just added flavor to a story that would've worked just fine without them. Here, Spock is the main show, and the effect is a powerful one. Spock's alien-ness defines who he is, but before "Time," that definition was restricted to his reliance on logic and his pointy ears. Finally we're given a sense of just how Other he can be, and it's

unsettling, because this is somebody we've come to trust. In a very real way, by giving Spock a culture—a smart and well-considered culture—the show is one step closer to what *Trek* was destined to become.

So, Spock's having some issues. It's so bad that even McCoy notices; Pointy-Ears isn't eating, he's "increasingly restive," and when Nurse Chapel brings him some yummy "plomeek soup," Spock freaks and throws the soup and Chapel out of his room. (The "You never give up hoping" to Chapel is pretty dickish, all things considered.) When Kirk confronts him, Spock refuses to explain himself, instead asking that the Enterprise take a quick detour and drop him off on Vulcan. Kirk's willing to help out, but orders come in from Starfleet that the ship has to arrive at its destination a week earlier than scheduled; which means a detour to Vulcan is out of the question.

Watching the story build here is a joy. First, we learn that Spock is freaking out, but the reasons are left up in the air. He says he needs to go home, but he won't say *why*, which puts Kirk (and us) in the uncertain position of wanting to help a friend but not knowing exactly what that help entails. The screws keep tightening: after Starfleet's orders come through, McCoy tells Kirk that getting Spock to Vulcan is absolutely imperative. Massive amounts of adrenaline are being dumped into his body, and something has to be done to stop it, or he'll be dead inside a week. Spock's still on duty, but his problems are affecting his performance—he secretly sets course for Vulcan, and when Kirk confronts him, Spock doesn't deny doing it. He just has no memory of the action.

You could say that's a kind of denial in and of itself, but I think Spock is being honest here. Part of what makes his troubles so compelling is that he's sympathetic and frightening both at once. When Kirk finally forces him to confess what's going on, Nimoy does a great job conveying the incredible amount of trust and shame he has to overcome to explain himself; after spending his whole life priding himself on his stoicism and control, he's now stripped betrayed by his own biology. Sure, it's an entirely Vulcan problem, but that doesn't make it any easier to accept.

Spock is experiencing *Pon farr*, the Time Of Mating, and while the idea sounds a little silly—stone-faced Nimoy suddenly turned into a randy thirteen year-old, lusting after nurses and throwing temper tantrums at the slightest provocation—the result is anything but. Once every seven years, all Vulcans must go through this, and the only way to deal with it is to travel back home and follow the usual ceremonies. It seems odd that someone as generally well-prepared as Spock would get caught off guard by the condition, but as he tells Kirk, he had hopes he would've been spared it, given his half-human ancestry. That's out the window now, and as much as Chapel would wish it otherwise, no one on the Enterprise can help him.

It makes you wonder, how did Spock's human mother hook up with his dad? Actually being on Vulcan must be the important part here. It's never explicitly explained, but that works to the episode's advantage. We're stuck watching everything through Kirk and McCoy's eyes, so we only know as much as they do—less, really. This specific aspect of Vulcanian culture isn't the sort of thing outsiders would know about (I wonder how many Vulcans work off-world? Must have some kind of "seven-year-itch" clause in their contracts), which means the rules aren't set down for us in stone. One of "Time"'s biggest strengths is taking a familiar face and twisting it into a stranger's, and that's helped by maintaining a certain level of mystery.

In the end, Kirk disobeys orders to save his friend (duh), and we find out that not only is Spock overcome with throbbing biological urges, he's also got a wife named T'Pring waiting for him back home. It was an arranged thing, done by their parents, and they haven't seen each other in years; unsurprisingly, she does not appear that happy to see him. (Although she is a Vulcan, so who the hell knows?) Spock asks Kirk and McCoy to accompany him to the ceremony—apparently it's his right to bring his closest pals, which is possibly the first time we see acknowledged that he and McCoy really do like each other. So that's nice.

Vulcan is, turns out, very, very hot. (The air is thin, too; both of these come into play later in the story, but it's also neat to have characters noting the different environment. It's something that the original series tended to let go by the wayside, more often than not.) The Pon farr ceremony takes place on ancestral land, inside what looks like a more complete version of Stonehenge. A few minutes after Spock and the others arrive, the marriage party makes it's grand entrance, led by none other than T'Pol, a big important type lady in the planetary government; important enough to have turned down a position in Starfleet multiple times. We get our first Vulcan hand salute between T'Pol and Spock, and

she doesn't seem all that fond to see Kirk and McCoy hanging around. But as Spock says, this is his right, and she has no choice but to accept it.

T'Pol makes her entrance, along with a stupid looking guy who we keep cutting to for reasons that will become obvious in ten minutes or so (or immediately, if you're clever). Everything seems to be going to plan, but when Spock tries to go through with the ritual, T'Pol stops him. She has chosen "the Challenge," which means there's going to be some fighting; and when it comes time to select her champion, T'Pol picks—Kirk.

While Spock probably gets the most attention in "Time," and deservedly so, we're seeing other heroes in new lights as well. It's worth noting that this is one of the few times in the series where Kirk's propensity to keep butting his head into everything actually works to his disadvantage. When T'Pol chooses him to fight against Spock, Kirk decides to accept, reasoning to McCoy that Spock wouldn't stand a chance against the stupid looking guy (who seems very unhappy that T'Pol didn't pick him). It sounds like a noble attempt to do the right thing, and in a way it is—but it's also pretty damn stupid. Spock is much, much stronger than Kirk, and he's in the grip of an adrenaline blood lust, which generally doesn't make a person weaker. The thin air and heat put Kirk even further at a disadvantage, because he's just not built to handle it. And to top it off, not once does he think to ask about the rules or the nature of the combat. He just assumes that it'll all work out okay if he bluffs his way along.

But it won't, though. Because the combat is to the *death*.

The fight between Spock and Kirk that follows is well-choreographed, and for once the doubling (what there is of it) isn't screamingly obvious. The best part of the whole thing is that Kirk loses; it's only by McCoy's quick thinking that he walks away in the end. Nimoy does some excellent work here at the end of the fight—with Kirk "dead," he's back to his usual calm self, in control enough to even congratulate T'Pol on her maneuvers. (And to get a really excellent "Fuck you" line in to her doltish suitor.) Back on the Enterprise, Spock turns himself in to McCoy for arrest, but it turns out he didn't murder anybody. McCoy managed to inject Kirk with a compound that would simulate his death, finding a way for everybody to get away unscathed. Spock is delighted to hear it; I think the smile he has on his face when he says "Jim!" is the first non-pharmaceutically enhanced one we've seen on his face.

As the original series goes, this is really as good as it gets. Which is maybe why "Who Mourns For Adonais?" seems like such a let-down. After expanding our crew's past, we're back to doing a greatest hits package up of some old themes. There's the godlike alien being; there's the attempts to push that godlike being to the limits of his endurance; and there's a female crew-member who becomes enamored of said godlike being, to the point of forgetting her obligations to Kirk and crew. "Adonais" has a clever idea or two, and it's entertaining enough in parts, but the structure is definitely wearing thin. Even the sadness at the end seems more out of obligation than anything earned.

One thing the episode does have going for it is what must be one of the goofiest images in *Trek* history: a giant hand holding the Enterprise frozen in space. It's an almost defensible visual—there is something at least a little creepy in a normal appendage getting blown up a million times bigger than its supposed to be, and the absurdity of that appendage latching onto a starship like a spoiled boy grabbing a Christmas ornament... Well, it could've worked. Maybe. But in practice it's just silly.

The Enterprise is out investigating, and Space Thing appears out of nowhere and nabs them. According to Spock, it's not a physical presence but an energy field; whatever it is, they can't break free of it. Which would have to be pretty embarrassing when it came time to send a report back to Starfleet.

Things get even weirder when a disembodied head pops up on the view screen. Classic profile, crown of laurel leaves, and the dude is definitely making with the fancy talk. He welcomes Kirk and the crew like he's been waiting for them—for 5,000 years, turns out. In spite of Kirk's best efforts, the guy refuses to give any more answers than that, instead demanding that somebody beam down to the nearby planet surface for a chat. (Anybody but Spock; the dude is only interested in humans.) Should they refuse, the head controls the hand, and the hand can squeeze the ship whenever it wants to.

So down to the planet we go: Kirk, McCoy, the irritatingly endearing Chekov (I think if I'd actually watched this when it aired, I probably would be more annoyed with the character, but since he's such a part of the original crew, it's hard to judge him critically), Scotty, and the current object of Scott's affections, Lieutenant Carolyn Palamas. One of "Adonais"'s many flaws is its clumsy attempts at gender politics; there's a bit at the beginning when we find out Scotty's putting the moves on the much-younger-than-him Palamas, and it's hard to know how to take it. McCoy says he's concerned about Scotty's efforts (so I guess he's a doctor *and* a matchmaker) because he doesn't think the young woman is interested—kind of hard to blame her there. Then he goes and makes things worse by saying, "On the other hand, she's a woman. All woman." So, um. Yeah, I guess.

When Kirk et al arrive, they find themselves in a pastoral setting, with a small Greek temple and patio area, and the dude himself, sitting on a throne in a golden toga. He identifies himself as Apollo, and explains that 5,000 years ago, he and the other gods were on Earth, showing everybody all kinds of special cool things, and then they left; in the time since, Apollo's just hung around waiting for humanity to improve and develop to the point where they could meet again. This concept, and the deductions Kirk makes from it, are the strongest part of the episode—the notion that Greek gods were actually incredibly advanced aliens isn't original, but it's solid, and the fact that Kirk and the others now have to deal with one of those "gods" on nearly equal terms could've made for some good drama.

It doesn't really go that way. Apollo lectures and yells, Kirk objects and yells back, and on the Enterprise, Spock works double duty to save everybody's ass. Apollo is instantly smitten with Carolyn, and she with him; as she's identified as an expert in ancient civilizations, it all plays out like a much dumber version of the Khan/Marla relationship back in "Space Seed." He transforms her boring old uniform into a pink robe, offering her a chance to show off her midriff where before she'd been showing off her legs, and then wows her by talking about how great he is. The fact that she's delighted by all this speaks poorly for her character; and the fact that Scotty keeps trying to throw himself in the middle to protect her "honor" speaks even worse of him. Curiously, their "relationship" is never resolved, and Scotty's repeated attempts to fight for her don't actually accomplish anything.

Well, maybe one thing; Kirk eventually realizes that Apollo, despite being able hold a ship in space and change the planet's weather with a whim, doesn't have inexhaustible resources. He gets tired from time to time, which is something that the Enterprise folks understandably want to take advantage of. Having apparently learned nothing from his earlier encounters with godlike beings, Kirk decides that Apollo must have some kind of energy source on the planet, and if they can destroy that source, everything will work out just fine. Surprisingly, unlike the five billion other times they've tried just such a strategy, this time it actually works.

Or does it? With Palamas's help, Kirk and the others manage to distract Apollo just long enough to let the Enterprise fire on the temple (hey, the hand's gone!), laying the place to waste. Once Apollo sees what they've done, he gets all sad and gives a speech addressing the other gods—the ones who used to be his buddies, who left long ago. Then he disappears himself. So maybe the temple was his main power source, or maybe he was just so disappointed that the new humans don't have much interest in worshipping him and decided it was time to move on.

It's the sort of ambiguity that could've been powerful, but instead comes off like authorial laziness. "Adonais" isn't a complete waste of time: there's entertainment in that ship-grabbing hand, Apollo makes for a distinctive presence, and some of Kirk's efforts against him, like the four way shouting match, are fun. And though it's a small part of the episode, watching Spock, Uhura, and Mister Kyle work together to try and get a message down to the planet is cool. (Hell, Spock even gives Uhura a compliment.) But it's all undone by lazy scripting and bizarre dialogue—like Kirk's impromptu, "Aw, maybe we *shoulda* worshipped him" after Apollo leaves. In the end this is one of those far-less-than-the-sum-of-its-parts eps, occasionally memorable, but a bit of a chore to get through.

#### **Grades:**

**"Amok Time": A**

**"Who Mourns For Adonais?": C+**

#### **Stray Observations:**



- T'Pol: "Live long and prosper." Spock: "I shall do neither. I have killed my Captain... and my friend."
- On his first episode in the opening credits, McCoy saves the day. Very cool.
- And yeah, that music cue rocks. (Notice how it gets a brief early in the episode, when Spock tries to explain to Kirk what's happening to him.)
- Next week: "The Changeling" and "Mirror, Mirror." To the Agony Booth!

## DISCUSSION

- Community (155)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 11:34am

I Kinda Hate The Pon Farr

"Amok Time" is absolutely one of my all-time favorite Trek episodes — or episodes of any TV show, really — for all of the reasons you describe, and for a episode that focuses so much on Kirk & Spock, I love how it's McCoy's slyness that saves the day.

But, ach, that Pon Farr. It's one of those single-episode plot points — like the Prime Directive, or the warp-speed max — that puts a crimp in so many things going in in the future. And it just falls apart when you think about how it works outside of the situation of the story. Hell, just think of Spock's parents. Did Amanda just happen to be around when Sarek was going through Pon Farr?

On the other hand, it did introduce one of my all-time favorite Trek tropes: that Vulcans think that they're better than everybody else.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 11:47am

To me, pon farr illustrates the deep tensions in the Vulcan psyche: They're a violent, emotional species that survives only by denying a basic part of their nature. The Vulcans are fascinating because their dedication to logic puts a leash on the monsters within. I wish Star Trek would explore that more.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 12:13pm

Actually, DC Fontana (who basically wrote the series bible on Vulcan and Vulcans) has pointed out again and again that just because Pon Farr happens once every seven years doesn't mean that's the only time Vulcans can mate. it's just when the urge is at its strongest. Vulcans can and do screw any time they want—it's only when Pon Farr hits that they lose their damn minds about it. Note that in Trek III Saavik is able to get young Spock through his first Pon Farr without going through it herself.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 12:15pm

Why does it seem so unlikely to people that Sarek could have been married/engaged to Amanda before Pon Farring baby Spock?

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 12:17pm

I couldn't agree more about the deep tensions in the Vulcan psyche. They're far more interesting as characters and a race with the violent history and the ongoing use of logic as a discipline to suppress those emotions than they would be if they were just mentats.

That said, I think I just object to the time-specificity of the mating cycle in and of itself.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 1:26pm

It seems reasonable to me that Vulcans would enter sexual maturity when they're about 90 or so, giving them plenty of mating cycles through the rest of their lives to propagate the species. I never thought of 7 years as a hard and fast number, though, like any biological process, it must vary from person to person. Maybe Pon Farr is the only time they're fertile and able to reproduce? The rest of the time they just fuck for fun?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 2:37pm

Tinsel-

We meet again. Your logic would seem faulty here, however, given the action of ST III where regenerated Spock has pon farr at, like, age 16.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 2:47pm

Barleycorn, I was going to bring that up, but then I remembered that A) Spock was aging at an accelerated rate, and 2) We don't really know how long Vulcans look like human teenagers. Of course, T'pol was revealed to be in her sixties, looked like an adult, and experienced Pon Farr at least once. This proves two things to me, 1) the Star Trek canon is less than consistent, and B) I have way too much free time at work today.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 2:56pm

K3- Well, you are undoubtedly right about inconsistencies, and we probably should leave it at that, but...

Seems like the problem with your theory is in reconciling it with the fact that Genesis Spock ages rapidly just exactly the right amount for Nimoy to step in and resume life at the right age. Which brings up a different interesting question-

How old is Spock supposed to be anyway? The Google has lots of folks asking but no really quick answer. In JJs movie are we supposed to understand Kirk and Spock are in the academy together? (No, don't tell me I'll wait my turn.)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 3:39pm

I think this is just a case of Clash of the Retcons. Better just to focus on the overall concepts - Vulcans live comparatively longer, go through a regular mating cycle, possibly reach maturity later, etc. - than get mired down in math.

There's a great Wiki on ST canon, what is and what isn't, and just how fluid it all can be, even during Rod's time.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 4:09pm

Maximum warp speed is a concept they still have trouble with.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 4:20pm

"We shall now mate every seven years like the Vulcans. For some of us this will mean much less sex. For others, much much more."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 4:23pm

I believe it was pretty much established that Amanda was not Sarek's first wife.

The only snag being that the main source for this is Star Trek V, which some may not like to keep in continuity...

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)barefoot jim

5/01/09 9:39pm

Yes, Its a wonder Spock doesn't have some really freaky health problems. His parents weren't from different races or different species. They were from different biological systems. Do Vulcans have 23 pairs of chromosomes? Do they even use DNA? Do Vulcans have a willie? Spock is more biological unlikely that crossing a human with a tree.

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)barefoot jim

5/02/09 11:14am

I can't for the life of me remember where I read it, but I once saw it stated that Vulcan penises are both green and forked.

The green at least seems reasonable given that their blood is green. The forked, well, who knows?

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)barefoot jim

5/02/09 12:29pm

Does this episode actually establish that Pon Farr occurs every 7 years, or is that something that was added to the mythology later and is now so ingrained that we don't think twice about it? Rewatching the scene where Spock explains it to Kirk, he mentions that the giant eel birds of Regulus V (I love all the creature names that are bandied about, but never scene) have an 11 year mating cycle, but, at least in that scene, he says nothing about a 7 year cycle for Pon Farr.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clamb](#)barefoot jim

5/03/09 4:14pm

It's funny—in Harlan Ellison's original script for "City on the Edge of Forever," written long before Ponn Farr was conceived, Spock talks about banging sluts and prostitutes in the spaceports. And in "Mudd's Women," Mudd tells his women that Spock can choose whether or not to be turned on.

[Reply](#)

- [breadalbane](#)TheNerdDilettante

7/19/16 3:05am

Nope — nowhere in this episode does it give any kind of indication how often pon farr occurs. And in fact, it would seem to occur only \*once\* in a Vulcan's life, based on the mythology of this episode. Only in later Star Trek works was this changed.

I hope that this vital question has now been cleared up — a mere 7 years after you posted it. Such is the way of pon farr trivia.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [a Nick](#) Zack Handlen

5/01/09 3:27pm

Dear ScienceFiction,

Can we please do away with the convention on apostrophied names to indicate alien-ness? T'Pau, T'Pring, etc. Star Trek is not alone in this by any means, Star Wars fiction and others are just as bad. (Quick thought, if Sarek begat Spock, then is T'Pring perhaps related to T'Pau?) I know writers want to spice things up and make sure the names sound strange and different, but it stretches credulity to think that people are going to voluntarily choose ungainly or difficult noises as names. If they're humanoid and vocal, they'll pick quick easy sounds just like us. At this point, I'd more likely believe an alien named "Van Heflin" than "Aul'thyr K'Yffruain."

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#) Nick

5/01/09 3:30pm

T'pol was going to be T'pau until the makers of Enterprise found out they'd have to pay royalties to Sturgeon for every episode she appeared on. A younger T'pau did show up in the fourth season 'Forge' arc.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) Nick

5/01/09 3:32pm

Muad'Dib!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Nick

5/01/09 3:51pm

Tinsel-

I did the laser eye surgery and spent my sightless convalescence listening to the book on tape (CD) of Dune. Listening to that british voice actor trying to make sure he put an inflection in where ever a name had a ' in it was priceless.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#) Nick

5/01/09 4:19pm

T'bitch

[Reply](#)

- [EdKeda](#) Nick

5/01/09 4:36pm

Seeing as Star Trek was the first to use the apostrophe trick on television (it was of course old news in written SF), it automatically gets a pardon, Nick.

You can only object to apostrophe'd alien names that originate in the 1980s or later.

K3K: I was going to mention that Sturgeon was long-dead by that time (1985, apparently) but I read that he had seven kids, so probably has an active estate keeping an eye on that stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKeda](#) Nick

5/01/09 4:46pm

Further:

"if Sarek begat Spock, then is T'Pring perhaps related to T'Pau?"

I think they established that those are all the equivalent of "first" names, with the whole "T-apostrophe" thing just being a common (though not universal) Vulcan convention for female names, with the same being true for "starts with S, ends with K" when naming a boy.

(As I said, there are exceptions, but it's not exactly an absolute rule that girl's names in English have to end in "-a" though that often signifies a female name.)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) Nick

5/01/09 5:14pm

Don't forget Tuvok! Cuz the white Vulcans all have names be startin with S, while the brothers all got names be startin with T, knowatimsayn?

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugarta](#) Nick

5/02/09 11:38am

T'Jamal? Is that you?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jra](#) Nick

5/02/09 2:10pm

Sorry to rain on your and Sturgeon's parade, but normally (in fact always, in my experience) a TV script is a work for hire and all characters belong to the producers, not the writer. That's why they can't just go and produce their own versions of their scripts...

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#) Nick

5/02/09 3:01pm

My bad for not doing more research. IMDB sez 'royalties' but the original quote just sed 'legalities'...

(from Star Trek Communicator circa. 2001):

[Executive Producer Rick] Berman admitted that the character of T'Pol (Jolene Blalock) was in fact going to be a much younger version of T'Pau as seen in the original "Star Trek" episode "Amok Time."

"It was discussed as a possibility, but it was also determined that there were legalities that made it difficult for us to do so, so we decided against it."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jra](#) Nick

5/03/09 5:41am

Very interesting... I'm gonna have to give that stuff a read...

[Reply](#)

- [alurina](#) Nick

5/03/09 4:32pm

it stretches credulity to think that people are going to voluntarily choose names with Ls and Rs in them. Crazy nonsense.

On the other hand, the ' character typically indicates a glottal stop, which is a very common human consonant, including in several dialects of English (notably cockney).

[Reply](#)

- [a Nicka](#) Nick

5/03/09 8:47pm

@ Huh?

First, I'm going to avoid getting into any cultural relativism argument, after all, I was talkin' bout sci-fi here.

Couple o' points; Of course full, formal names can be very difficult. My own, despite being phonetic, has a "ski" at the end that sends people up a wall with adding phantom j's and k's and z's. But at the same time, everyone usually has a simple diminutive form as well. For me, "Nick". Easy world-wide. I'm also confident that your examples prolly go by Faisal, Ngugi, and Sri in day-to-day life. Also, as odd as those names may seem in english, I'm sure their peers have no problem with them. I'd bet it doesn't take long for most people to pick up on the pronunciations either. I'm a Milwaukee Bucks fan, and it took less than a month to get comfortable saying "Luc M'bah a Mouthe" correctly.

That said, my gist was about the literary convention of the apo'd names to indicate alien-ness. I've come to find it overdone and distracting, and I don't see anything unusual about the idea that a similar life-form/cultural might also have decided that "Sam" or "Meg" is a perfectly useful name.

At least that's what my Korean friend Lee told me.

[Reply](#)

- [alurina](#) Nick

5/04/09 1:32pm

Your point that the apostrophe to signify alienness is overdone is valid.

Your point that no one would voluntarily choose a name that is difficult for Californians to pronounce is invalid.

Discussion closed. thanks for playing!

[Reply](#)

- [a Nicka](#) Nick

5/04/09 4:16pm

No one mentioned Californians, chief. Nor did I say "no one." But you guys just keep hittin' them there straw-men. You'll feel better in the morning.

[Reply](#)

- [alurina](#) Nick

5/04/09 4:45pm

I feel better already!

[Reply](#)

- [EdKeda](#) Nick

5/04/09 6:07pm

As I said before Nick, it's overdone NOW, but your complaint doesn't apply to Trek's use of it in this episode, due to the time at which it was done.

Complaining about apostrophes in fake alien languages is only valid from the 80s onward.

[Reply](#)

- [a Nicka](#) Nick

5/04/09 8:23pm

You are correct, it was unfair of me to include old ST in my complaint. I think Timothy Zahn is probably the worst culprit out there, and he's Star Wars, not Trek. So noted and conceded.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Codename Workerbee](#) Zack Handlen

5/01/09 11:38am

Vulcan

has there ever been a shot in any series or movie of Vulcan that doesn't make it look like it's almost entirely uninhabited? Between this episode and Star Trek 4, I don't think I've ever seen vulcan on film. Any episodes of Enterprise have it? Anything outside the usual council meeting room style?

I'm working on my goatee in preparation for Mirror, Mirror

[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 11:55am

There were a few episodes of Enterprise that take place on Vulcan, and they looked decent, though they again dodge the issue of urban life by taking place in the desert and on T'Pol's mom's ranch.

There were also fun callbacks, like Bakula having to wear sunglasses because he does not have the Vulcan inner eyelid, as well as an attack by a wild Vulcan animal of the same variety as Spock's childhood pet from the animated series.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 12:30pm

Yeah, Enterprise had some nice scenes on Vulcan. I don't think we've seen any major Vulcan cities but it would make sense that, living in such a harsh climate, people would spend most of their time indoors.

This is one thing that Trek has always excelled at best - developing complex and detailed mythologies for a whole host of varied alien cultures. TNG expanded on the inner workings of Klingon culture (prune juice, a warrior's drink!). DS9 gave us lots of juicy Ferenghi and Cardassian stories (you can keep your Bore-jorans, thankyouverymuch). VOY had all that awesome Borg stuff and ENT reeeeeeally tried to top them all, even though no one was watching - Xindi, Andorrans, blind albino Andorrans, etc... (then nailed the coffin shut with those Nazialiens or Alienazis guys.)

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 12:40pm

"Way to kill the franchise, Bakula."

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 12:56pm

Mr. Scott Bakula's career never returned home.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 1:30pm

Whaddya mean? Bakula is Chuck's dad!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 1:40pm

I believe there's a shot of a Vulcan city in the animated series episode where Spock goes back through the Guardian of Forever.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 1:57pm

Much as I've always loved my Bakkie, his gnashed-teeth nostril-snorting acting eventually just got unwatchable. Only Shatner can pull that shit off, everyone knows that. Plus the Xindi arc was way ahead of its time, now that people are used to watching complicated storylines that unfold over a whole season, having to pay close attention to every ep.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 2:18pm

Since it's been brought up, I just finished watching Enterprise from start to finish. While it's certainly due its share of criticism, I've never understood, and still don't understand, the hating. More than any other show in the series, it was written not just by geeks, but by Trek geeks. It was really a lot of fun the way they'd pick up a forgotten alien race here and an abandoned ship there, sew up details from all the other series, and fill out the back-story of the whole Trek universe. In the fourth season, it really started to hit its stride; several of the multi-episode arcs were quite compelling (putty faced Nazis aside). Maybe it was too geeky for a mainstream audience, but I found a lot to enjoy.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 2:27pm

Tinsel, you answered some of my question while I was writing it. The Xindi arc was too much for a show that was already struggling to develop an audience. More of the two or three part shows like in the fourth season would have been better. DS9 took much longer to build up to that sort of thing.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 3:55pm

The Enterprise episodes that dealt with Trek's history, like the Eugenics Wars and early warp testing, were easily the strongest in the series. The whole Xindi arc was totally unnecessary—it buried the series.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 4:17pm

I don't think it was so much the Xindi arc as it was the temporal cold war arc from seasons 1 and 2. They didn't make it as compelling. I thought the Xindi arc was actually very good as well- one starship alone in hostile territory, trying their hardest to make sure Earth isn't blown to pieces.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Codename Workerbee

5/01/09 4:43pm

You're right about the temporal cold war stuff. It really didn't go anywhere.

I like the theme of one ship vs the Universe too; I just think they could have used an existing race, like the Romulans. How cool would it have been to do a long arc involving the Romulan war & the creation of the Neutral Zone?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Codename Workerbee

5/02/09 2:01pm

Well, here I go again:

Like the Xindi's, really like Enterprise:

The song, however, was inexcusable...

My theory is it was a bit too 'inside' for outsiders, and fans had grown up and had other things to do... I cannot for the life of me see anything to actually get angry about, and it certainly found its feet as quickly as any other Trek series.

I have a French friend who says every Trek needs three seasons to get good... This holds true for Enterprise, I think, though it was always worthwhile for me...



[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Codename Workerbee

5/02/09 3:15pm

I agree with your French friend. Unfortunately for ENT, that meant they only had one season to be good. And, yeah, as much as I enjoyed it from the start, it may have been too geeky for the masses.

"fans had grown up and had other things to do..." Not me, obviously.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Codename Workerbee

5/04/09 12:30am

Yeah, that "character" thing is definitely what turned me off of DS9, plus all the broken promises— "This is the seedy side of the Trek universe," "Not everything and everyone works right out here", bla bla bla.

[Reply](#)

- [Bag of Hammers](#)Codename Workerbee

5/05/09 2:22pm

Based on this episode, I'm guessing everything on Vulcan was made in China 'cuz it breaks like cheap crap.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Aler](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 11:08am

Fight! Fight!

I worked with a guy who would hum the Amok Time battle music whenever people would argue in a meeting.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>Awesome:

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Aler

5/01/09 11:29am

hell, I'm humming it right now!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Aler

5/01/09 12:36pm

It sounds just like the Decapod 10 national anthem!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Aler

5/01/09 12:42pm

Aler - I'm going to try that in my next team meeting (either that or I'm going to wager 4,000 quatloos on the newcomer)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 2:08pm

Why not today? There, that's better.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Aler

5/01/09 2:32pm

PM, you've taken your first step into a larger world.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Aler

5/01/09 2:35pm

@ Pizza-

Google: "Amok Time" + "weapon" = "Lirpa"

Isn't technology wonderful?

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 2:38pm

Hilarious and thanks k3000.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 3:38pm

Thanks JB. "Lirpa", huh? Kind of a ... weak-ass name for a badass weapon. Why not "The Vulcanator" or "The Gillette A-Mach-Time 3". No wonder Shat's chest so smooth.

The closest blade to Shatner's chest EVER

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Aler

5/01/09 3:43pm

It's 'April' spelled backwards. Is that significant?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Aler

5/01/09 3:48pm

One of the early draft names for Kirk was Robert April, but now I sound like Jeff Jensen.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 3:50pm

Those clever Trek geeks God bless 'em.

Nice catch, it must mean something but it escapes me (can't Google everything there is SOME work to do today).

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 3:52pm

JBMD is hot on the trail.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Aler

5/01/09 4:08pm

That would make me want to attack the person doing the humming.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Aler

5/01/09 4:28pm

Watching that awesome clip again, during the fight, when the Lirpa and the gong\* break, is Kirk like "Wow Spock's crazy" or was it more Shatner ad-libbing because they weren't supposed to break, and he was thinking more like, "Wow and they promised the prop department more money this season... but...I'm still.... Bill.... Shatner".

Makes McCoy's "Spock! NO!(they only built 2 Lirpas, don't hit the ground too hard with it!)" even better.

\*ok please don't tell me there's a special Vulcan name for the gong too... but I already know the answer to that don't I

[Reply](#)

- [AlerAler](#)

5/01/09 10:31pm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>And here's the heartwarming scene from the end of the episode:

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running ClamAler](#)

5/03/09 9:36pm

"It's 'April' spelled backwards. Is that significant?"

Well, April IS the cruelest month. Now what do we make of the ahn-woon, the bolo/sling weapon Spock "kills" Kirk with?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 12:47pm

Upcoming Star Trek

Hey Zach, are you writing the review for "Star Trek" next week? I think us geeks would appreciate the perspective of a true fan.

I for one, am a bit concerned by the trailers that it may be a bit more of a sci-fi action movie made for the masses than a true Star Trek movie. (but I'll stop there to honor the previously requested spoiler moratorium)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnuth](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 12:57pm

I'm reserving judgement for the film until I've seen it. My dad and I are already planning to catch the matinee next Sat. afternoon.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 1:16pm

Don't get me wrong, I'll be there along with my wife and son, who's just getting old enough to get into ST (we're watching The Undiscovered Country as I type). I'm just a bit worried that it'll be a bit too "mainstream".

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 1:37pm

I saw it last night. (I won tix in a radio station contest.) It's a true Star Trek movie. A nice combo of hard sci-fi, character development and blowing shit up. Given the fact that it's an origin story, I thought that they were able to combine the retcon and the fanwanking incredibly well. And that they pulled off the trick of being both a reboot and a continuation of TOS.

That said, given how much money that these films have made over the years, they've always been mainstream.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 1:50pm

Thanks Jim! I'm glad to hear that, can't wait till next week!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 2:26pm

I have already prejudged it. I give it a 7.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 2:40pm

Shut up, shut up, shut up!

[fingers in ears, humming loudly]

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 4:18pm

Spock dies in it again.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 4:35pm

Nooooooooo!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)hercules rockefeller

5/01/09 4:42pm

I hope Pike has a better fate other than the blinking lightbox.

And by better I mean a quick death.

But please no spoilers re: that, Jim, seeing thursday and and glad to hear you liked it.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugar](#)hercules rockefeller

5/02/09 11:36am

NO MORE NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOS!

(Apparently Wolverine had enough for the next 10 theatrical releases.)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)hercules rockefeller

5/02/09 2:07pm

Wolver ine defintely did the Calculon scream to the Nth degree!

That said, I'm sad someone here saw it before me, because for once here in France we will see it before you American-types!

Movies come out here on Wednesday!

And I shall be there!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 11:50am

Galaxy Quest

Hey. Didn't you say you were going to write up "Galaxy Quest" in between seasons?

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 12:24pm

And the futurama star trek episode?

"I don't have enough copies, so Walter Koenig and George Takei have to share."

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 12:47pm

I was thinking about it, but it just worked out better to jump in to season 2. Maybe somewhere down the line, though.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 1:12pm

(my turn to do it!):

WELLLLLLLLLSHIEEEEEEEEE!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 2:39pm

Star Trek + The Simpsons = That final Futurama episode. Most geeky 22 minutes of television ever!

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 3:34pm

Can those of us who don't like Star Trek leave?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 3:49pm

Not without the door hitting you on the ass on your way out.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 3:52pm

You're the one who needs to be here most of all!

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 4:01pm

@barleycorn: Settle down, it was just a quote.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 4:11pm

And the correct answer is: "No, you have to stay even longer!"

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Breakfast Balls

5/01/09 6:45pm

No, the answer is...

KOENING: Good question!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Breakfast Balls

5/02/09 11:32am

But, Keptin...

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Breakfast Balls

5/02/09 8:28pm

Now say "nuclear wessels"!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [IN51P1D](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 12:45pm

T'Pau?

Give a little bit of heart and soul!

That makes two 80s bands I can think of that were named after kitschy sci-fi villains. (Duran Duran, of course.)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)IN51P1D

5/01/09 12:49pm

She wasn't really a villain though—just an authority figure connected to Spock's family. She was portrayed as fairly sympathetic as I recall, though it's been a while since I've seen the episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)IN51P1D

5/01/09 2:22pm

Spock's Beard, anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)IN51P1D

5/01/09 2:30pm

OK, I was a couple years off. I'm so ashamed...

[Reply](#)

- [Estonian Next Top Victim](#)IN51P1D

5/01/09 9:58pm

Thick accent: "I grieve with thee." or something to that effect.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)IN51P1D

5/02/09 11:34am

Was that the same character played by DAME Judith Anderson later in, I think, the third movie? Gosh, she was good, but she always is.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)IN51P1D

5/02/09 2:04pm

Dame Judie?

Wow, man, you're really teaching me something there.. I'll have to go check it out!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)IN51P1D

5/02/09 3:05pm

That was T'lar, a different Vulcan High Priestess altogether (same naming convention, though).

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Eight Cats](#)IN51P1D

5/03/09 8:23pm

Not named after a villain, but Heaven 17 got their name from the record store scene in "A Clockwork Orange".

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)IN51P1D

5/03/09 9:41pm

Wasn't there a band name Tox U-taht, or something or other, after the Maguffin from a terrible Next Generation episode, the first one with that annoying Vash character (and btw, the name Vash always sounded like a nasty term for female genitalia, a cross between "vagina" and "gash")?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)IN51P1D

5/03/09 10:55pm

'Cept it was pronounced 'Vosh'. Is that the episode where Picard spends the show running around Risa in a too small robe and shorts? That made it all worthwhile IMHO.

[Reply](#)

- [TreeRo](#)Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris

12/17/21 5:07am

Definitely not a villain. She even pulled some strings with the Federation to excuse the Enterprise's absence from the ceremony on the other planet.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [adept42](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 7:24pm

What would Spock have done if T'Pring had just told him she didn't want to get married?

She obviously didn't think he would just release her from the engagement or she wouldn't have initiated the combat. She probably guessed right because if Spock wanted her enough to kill his best friend then it's unlikely he'd have just taken no for an answer. So would Spock have married and had sex with a non-consenting woman? Wouldn't that be rape? Spock doesn't come out of Pon Far till he believes he's killed Kirk, and there's a sick kind of logic to that; rape and murder are both the most extreme forms of objectification.

There are a lot of other disturbing things about this episode. The way T'Pring is referred to as someone Spock will possess when he marries her. The way men have the right to reject their spouse but women do not. The way all of this is portrayed as a biological necessity -that any man will rape or murder if it's the only way he can get sex. You also have to wonder about how much this will be even worse for LGBT Vulcans.

I know this is an alien race with a different reproductive process, but I can't help seeing strong parallels to arguments that the high rate of violence against women is something no society can overcome due to our biology. When Spock has regained control of himself and T'Pol had explained herself he has this killer line: "I caution that you may find wanting is superior to having. It is not logical, but it is true." Remember that Spock believes he's killed his best friend, his career in Starfleet is over, and he'll likely be executed or spend the rest of his life in jail. All that seemed worth it to have T'Pol just a few minutes ago, but it all seems like such an insane waste now that he has her. Similar tragedies happen ever day here on earth, but I believe we can overcome them by the time we're flying around the galaxy.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugartadept42](#)

5/02/09 11:40am

"C'mon, Spock, hurry up....we've got vaccine to deliver..."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jradept42](#)

5/02/09 2:13pm

I just hope all other possible life-forms in the universe conform to our moral standards... Otherwise, they're going to Hell!

(I'm looking at you promiscuous neomammalianmicrocarpa! Where's that wedding ring?)

[Reply](#)

- [adept42adept42](#)

5/03/09 3:03am

Well, you can make the case that Vulcans are intended to be contrasted with human culture; they're what we would become if we suppressed all emotion. From that perspective, this episode makes the case that sexual urges can never be fully controlled do to biology and will inevitably lead to violence if they aren't satiated. That's an innacurate but prevalent view on earth, and it doesn't seem coincidental that it got aired in this episode.

And yes, I would vote to keep cultures who sanction rape out of Starfleet. I'm aware that it is routine among many animal species, but any truely civilized race should be able to realize that they need to hold themselves to a higher standard.

[Reply](#)

- [alurinadept42](#)

5/03/09 4:37pm

"Similar tragedies happen ever day here on earth, but I believe we can overcome them by the time we're flying around the galaxy."

That's the philosophical underpinning of Roddenberry's edict that interpersonal conflict be excluded from TNG, since humans would be "beyond such foolishness" by the 24th century. The assumption is that technological and moral sophistication are linked. Seems very suspect to me. If supersonic airliners and iPhones haven't made moral paragons of us all, why do you think warp drive and tricorders will help?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clamadept42](#)

5/03/09 9:48pm

Cracked.com just ran an article about how profoundly wrong that theory has been and how it has disappointed many men who shoulda known better:

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clamadept42](#)

5/03/09 9:49pm



Oops, here's the tinyurl:

<http://tinyurl.com/cuhmvy>

Poor Orville. Poor Nobel. Poor Whoever-Invents-the-Ion-Cannon.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)badept42

6/20/14 8:16am

Yup. As should any culture that denies reproductive equality to the male of the species. Out, Earthlings!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 10:59am

The grammar Taliban is here, Mr. Handlen

And they want to remind you that while the means by which Sarek and Amanda Grayson met up are intriguing, it does not "beg the question." It "raises the the question" of how they met. An example of begging the question (in which the conclusion is assumed by the premises) would be "If Sarek was not a filthy Vulcan pervert, he would not mack on that human chick."

Other than that, the Amok Time review was your usual top of the shelf stuff. Personally, I never thought the idea of a seven-year mating cycle for Vulcans was unusual; it seemed to reflect natural ones in animals, and underlines how much the Vulcans have to struggle to preserve their reason-based society.

[Reply](#)

- [The Elusive Robert Denby](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 11:01am

And don't worry; the grammar Taliban just beat me senseless for the double use of "the."

[Reply](#)

- [the new junior executive](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 11:19am

And while we're at it - it's Walter Koenig.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 12:51pm

What doesn't make sense to me is that Spock is fairly old, right? He was serving on the Enterprise with its previous Captain for 11 years before Kirk took over, so he's been in space (and generally alive) long enough to have gone through Pon Farr several times. Why would he only NOW think that he would be spared? That every seven years thing never made sense to me.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 12:58pm

Maybe he had previously skipped a cycle?

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 1:04pm

And how long does it go on, anyway? Does Sarek still get the Pon Farr in his blood? How many more Pon Farr's did Spock have to go through just in his sped-up growth process on Genesis? It doesn't make sense that he'd only have to go through one, unless he's either much younger than he looks, or Vulcans don't reach sexual maturity until a late age.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/01/09 3:13pm

Vulcan menopause must be a real bitch.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)The Elusive Robert Denby

5/02/09 11:28am

DAMMIT Jim, Spock's on the rag!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 10:56am

not usually a spelling ass

you say that he is sitting on a "thrown". i think it should be "throne".

[Reply](#)

- [Vardulon](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 11:55am

Are you writing this with dictation software, because all the typos seem to be homonym things.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 12:46pm

Nah, I'm just inept.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 1:05pm

Coincidence? I think not!

[Reply](#)

- [DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 1:20pm

I do not believe either of you when you say you're not nitpicky spelling asses.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 3:42pm

Turducken

[Reply](#)

- [The Surreptitious Mr Glitch](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 4:04pm

Uma...Oprah

Uma...Oprah

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/01/09 9:11pm

As long as we're pointing out errors, "favorite all-time episode"? Is that like a favorite part-time episode? I like this episode as well, but an all-time episode sounds like something from Dr Who.

[Reply](#)

- [ChicJanowicz](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/02/09 12:17pm

"he's now stripped betrayed by his own biology" should be divided by a comma or a dash.

"he's now stripped, betrayed by his own biology."

"he's now stripped — betrayed by his own biology."

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 10:50am

Season 2 is the tits

As an ST newbie undergoing the same project as Zack, just a few weeks ahead of him, I was really impressed by the general leap in quality in Season 2. There are lots of kickass episodes on the horizon.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Gleeth Yurnix

5/01/09 5:51pm

there's a similar jump in quality between the first two seasons of TNG, i think.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Gleeth Yurnix

5/02/09 1:45pm

Yeah, there's a lot of dross in TNG's beginnings, and I was glad they knocked off Tasha too...

That said, I've been rewatching them, and it's not nearly as dire as I'd remembered. I watched the pilot when it aired and hated it so much I didn't watch again for a decade... This time? Well, it's quite well directed, for one thing, even if they start recycling ideas from the get-go...

I didn't notice any big quality leap until season 3, where I am now, and quite enjoying it, too!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Gleeth Yurnix

5/02/09 3:11pm

I liked the pilot. It was the shamefully recycled "The Naked Now" that drove me off for a season or so before I gave it another chance.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Gleeth Yurnix

5/02/09 3:12pm

I think I meant 'shamelessly'...

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Gleeth Yurnix

5/03/09 9:28pm

In this case, it's ta-MAY-to, to-MAH-to...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Selig7](#)Zack Handlen

5/02/09 4:33pm

Incidental music

No matter how awesome "Amok Time" is, I can't help giggling at the melodramatic swells in music. The acting is strong enough to convey the weight of the scenes, so the music feels superfluous. I'm personally looking forward to the space-hippie episode. Not only do we get to see Kirk, Spock, and McCoy use their individual talents to utterly mindfuck a group of insecure, omnipotent invaders, but it's the episode that could be considered Scotty's finest hour. Not only does he prove that he can hold his liquor better than a "superior" being, but he does so by draining almost all of the alcohol on the ship.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Selig7

5/03/09 4:58pm

I think you mean the Kelvans in "By Any Other Name", not the space-hippies.

[Reply](#)

- [Selig7](#)Selig7

5/07/09 7:18pm

Yeah, the Kelvans. Sorry. I watched the two episodes back-to-back, so I must have gotten confused. The Kelvan episode is the one I'm looking forward to.

[Reply](#)

- [Ged](#)Zack Handlen

5/04/09 1:33am

Music

The music score from the TOS is so good I think Mr. Handlen should detour from the episode by episode format and write a link-filled article discussing it. I cannot think of another TV show that has such distinctive background music - was one person responsible for all the music? Besides the Amok Time fighting tune, my favorite bit is the bass line that indicates there is a spooky mystery afoot. Too lazy to find it on You Tube.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ged

5/05/09 5:42am

I've got a copy of all the music for TOS on my computer and it is amazingly varied..

Even the smallest cues can go from battle, to humour, to 'sexy' music, all within the context of the original theme...

I was quite amazed at how well it hold up out of context, and in fact with how much of it there is (There were 3 or 4 CDs worth, if memory serves...)

[Reply](#)

- [Xtracurlyfries](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 3:08pm

STOP!

Amok Time...

[Reply](#)

- [Alcing Functionholic](#)Xtracurlyfries

5/01/09 5:07pm

My my my pon farr hits me so hard...

[Reply](#)

- [gil mann](#)Xtracurlyfries

5/04/09 9:36am

Engorges my Vulcan nards  
Thanks, dad, for blessing me  
With green green blood and ears pointy  
Feels good, part human but  
A superdope halfling with a bowl cut  
And I'm knooooown as Spock  
Fight ya to the death if ya cock-block

[Reply](#)

- [xochi](#)Zack Handlen

5/01/09 12:15pm

Chekov

I once saw him talk at a convention, and he claimed that during Wrath of Khan, they put a pinup girl poster on the screen so they'd all be looking in the same place. He said that he had a hard time not cracking up when he had to say (imagine that ridiculously thick pseudo-Russian accent) "They put things... in our bodies!" Made a bunch of horny geeks laugh, whether it's true or not.

But yeah, I know what Zack means about endearing v. annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)xochi

5/02/09 2:03pm

However they did it, his line reading on that is really good...  
The whole bug in the ear thing made my girlfriend (not a Trek fan) jump! It was great!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bZack Handlen

6/20/14 8:05am

"After expanding our crew's past, we're back to doing a greatest hits package up of some old themes. There's the godlike alien being; there's the attempts to push that godlike being to the limits of his endurance; and there's a female crew-member who becomes enamored of said godlike being, to the point of forgetting her obligations to Kirk and crew."

Who knows, really, what show you're watching. To this point in the second season there have been five or six beings with powers substantially superior to the tech Enterprise can muster; pushing such beings to limits of their endurance? a couple; female crew member smitten and negligent? none to this point, or one, if we want to be extremely generous with Space Seed, but Khan's hardly godlike. Spock is at least his equal.

Certainly not a great episode, but it's often hard to picture how you arrive at your conclusions, since your premises make too little sense.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/05/09 5:29am

DATA's TWIN?

Heya,

I'm posting this late, so I'll probably try again next time, but has anyone noticed the striking resemblance between Brett Spiner and the british actor Matthew Macfadyen (Frost/Nixon, Little Dorrit, PRide and Predjudice)?

It's really quite striking. In Frost/nixon I kept wondering how Spiner could pull off such a perfect accent!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/07/09 9:01am

I Have no Audience, But I must scream: NEW TREK!

Nobody's hear to listen, but I have nowhere I else to scream:

I saw the new Trek last night, and I could complain about a lot of details (kids on the bridge), only I don't care! I had a great time!

Go see it and let's find someplace to talk!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/02/09 1:43pm

Hand o' God

I have to say, much like the shot of the Enterprise in the Earth sky, this is one of the images that rocked my world as a kid. I used to imitate it with my Enterprise model as a young un'..

Yeah, it's silly, but it really REALLY knocked my little socks off...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/02/09 1:41pm

Great Summaries

Just a word here, as one who bitched a bit about City on the Edge of Forever's write-up: This was really top-notch this week. Funny, incisive, and very clear to boot.

Thanks a lot, Zack! Season 2 is looking great!

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/05/16 11:08pm

I'm pretty sure Zach made an Into the Woods reference.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Changeling" / "Mirror, Mirror"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published May 8, 2009

[Comments \(157\)](#)



It's been a weird week. One of those "if necessity led to invention, I would've mothered myself up a time machine" weeks. Six different books to read, TV shows up the wazoo (which makes them *very* difficult to review, by the way), and a nasty toothache that, one dentist appointment and negative 186 bucks later, I now know is caused by a rotted out wisdom tooth. So I've got that to look forward to. But hey life of crime, can't complain. As much as it may sound like I'm bitching, I'm more trying to justify the fact that I still haven't seen the new *Star Trek* movie. In fact, there's a good chance I won't see it till Sunday. If then!

I'm a little blue, no question. I guess I'll just have to settle for this week's classic *Trek* double injection, "The Changeling" and "Mirror, Mirror." No flashy new effects, lens flares, or over-priced popcorn for this nerd. Just good old fashioned plywood sets and melodrama, and, okay, a bit of camp. As consolation prizes go, I could do a good deal worse; plus, the tooth doesn't hurt so bad, and it's gonna be the weekend soon. Let's do this thing.

In a weird way, it *is* kind of relevant to cover "Changeling" now, because the premise—a space probe merges with another probe, gets incredible powers, and starts a'killing—actually served as inspiration for the first *Trek* movie, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture: The Further Adventures of Kirk, Spock, and That Guy You've Never Met Before Who's Someday Gonna Be On Seventh Heaven*. But while the movie used the idea to treat audiences to some vaguely 2001-ish setpieces and an ending that managed to disturb in just the same amounts as it inspired, the original episode had more modest intentions, even if it didn't reduce its scope.

The Enterprise is investigating a distress call sent out from the Malurian system. It's a group of populated planets, including a human science outpost, but a sensor sweep of the area indicates exactly zero life readings—that's 4 billion Malurians vanished without a trace. (Surely it can't be that easy to scan an entire system for evidence of life? Neither Spock nor Kirk seem at all doubtful of the readings, beyond a basic incredulity at their implications; I can't imagine how one would even go about designed a scanning system that could read a whole planet from orbit, let alone half a dozen of them.) Before anyone can wrap their minds around the situation, the Enterprise is attacked by a series of energy bolts equivalent to 90 photon torpedoes. The shields hold up initially, but it's a good thing when Spock manages

to find the only object left in the area capable of firing the bolts—an object about one meter in length, and 500 kilograms in weight (how do you weigh something in a vacuum?). They make contact, interpret it's complex, binary based response, and Kirk gives the standard, "We mean you no harm, I'm Captain James T. Kirk, please don't kill us" speech. After some more negotiations, the energy attack ceases, and the object, whatever it is, invites itself inside.

Everyone on the bridge had assumed the object was some kind of space-craft; which seems logical, given that's the sort of thing one would expect to encounter in space. But what they beam aboard is something else; a space probe that looks a bit like the Tin Man minus arms and legs. The probe floats slowly through the air, talks in a monotone, and asks a lot of questions. It calls itself Nomad, and it has a mission: to scan for biological infestations, and destroy all which are imperfect. Judging by the recently exterminated Malurians, Nomad is *very* dedicated to the cause.

"Changeling" is spent largely on Kirk and Spock trying to figure out what the hell Nomad really is, and then underestimating it so it can kill a few red shirts and float along its merry way. The name is familiar to them, as it's the same name as a space probe sent out from Earth in the 2000's. (The movie version uses a real life Voyager spacecraft, which is cooler.) Thing is, *that* Nomad was reported destroyed by a meteor; and besides, it's only purpose was to catalog life. Nothing about destroying it. Eventually, after Spock mind melds with the machine (this is the first time the mind meld seemed on the silly side, and a little too easy, story-wise), they realize that what they've got is the original Nomad, combined with a probe from another galaxy, with enough power to make it dangerous to anything it deems unworthy of existence.

That's just about anything. The first time Kirk and Spock leave Nomad on its own (there's a guy in the room, but while he doesn't get killed, he doesn't do a lot of good), the machine hears Uhura singing over the communicator and finds its way up to the bridge to figure out what the sound is. Uhura, understandably startled by the thing's questions, isn't able to provide a satisfactory response, so Nomad reads her mind—wiping it clean in the process. When Scotty tries to intervene, Nomad kills him.

Now that's a surprise. The Uhura mind-wipe and Scotty's murder are the sort of things you expect to happen to guest stars, not the regular cast. Of course, it all gets worked out; Nomad has decided that Kirk is its creator, and realizing that Kirk isn't too happy about Scotty being dead, offers to "fix" him. A few minutes of study on biology, and it does just that—it's a remarkable display of power that, like basically everything else Nomad does, goes nowhere. "Changeling"'s biggest flaw is that it inflates the numbers: Nomad isn't just exterminating life, it's already killed 4 billion life forms. And not only can it kill, it can also resurrect (although I'm betting the Malurians are gone for good). And not only can it streamline the ship's engines, it can shoot them to warp speeds (all the way up to 10!) that even Scotty considers "impossible."

Making Nomad powerful makes sense—the more of a threat it is, the more interested we are in finding out where it came from, and how Kirk and the others are going to deal with it. But raise the numbers too high, and they become meaningless. I keep going back to 4 billion; that's an entire race, wiped out, and once past the opening scene, nobody seems to give a damn. Hell, we even get a new danger, that Nomad is planning on going to Earth, as though the fact that it had already killed hundreds of millions and more was irrelevant when compared to the possibility that humans could die. Maybe Malurians liked to eat children, I dunno. Maybe everyone's glad they're dead.

As for Uhura... It's great to see Nichelle Nichols getting more to do, but the whole subplot of McCoy and Nurse Chapel having to re-educate her from square one is goofy. It only takes them two weeks (if that) to get the job done, which makes you wonder why anybody bothers with public schooling anymore; if someone with no knowledge can go from zero to the bridge in that short a time, does that mean that in the future, high school takes about a day? Uhura apparently remembers her Swahilli just fine, for some reason—either Chapel taught it to her first, or she just retained it, and either way, it makes you wonder if she has any personality left. Unsurprisingly, the whole re-education process is never mentioned again, and Uhura is exactly the same next week as she's been all the other weeks.

"Changeling" is fun, but with Uhura's brain-wipe and the general laziness in regards to Nomad's powers, it's not as good as it might have been. Thankfully, the resolution works well. It's been copied so often that it's probably familiar even if you've never seen it before. After ill-advisedly confessing that he's imperfect (Spock reaction shot!) Kirk forces Nomad



to realize that it, too, is imperfect (it mistook "Kirk" for "Roykirk," the *real* creator), and as such, must be exterminated. Nomad freaks out, Spock and security get it into the transporter room, and beam it out into space right before it explodes. Problem solved. Of course, there's still time for the button scene, so Spock can express regret that a genocidal, insane robot had to be destroyed. Y'know, normally I'm on his side, but this time, he's on his own.

The logic argument Kirk uses on Nomad has been parodied more than a few times, but it's nothing compared to (akward segue in 3...2...) "Mirror, Mirror," the first parallel dimension episode in the history of *Trek*, and the first time anyone thought to share the valuable information that facial hair = evil. (I had a goattee for a year in college. Let's just say, there's a certain sub-basement in the East dorm that nobody goes to anymore. Mostly 'cause I peed in the corners. A lot.) It's hard to judge exactly how influential the episode is; the idea, presuming opposite versions of iconic characters to contrast them against the originals and give the actors a chance to go batshit, seems almost inevitable, like a sitcom where a pregnant woman gives birth in some place that isn't a hospital, or a doctor show where somehow dresses like a clown. It's too perfect not to have happened eventually.

Inevitable or not, "Mirror, Mirror" was one of the first (was there an earlier version of the idea? anybody?), and even forty years later, it's still a blast. Kirk, McCoy, Uhura, and Scotty are finishing a meeting planetside with the Halkan Council, a pacifist group that refuses to let Starfleet mine their lithium crystals for fear of what would be done with all that power. (The Halkan's are supposed to be peaceful, noble beings, but they come across as willfully naive idiots here; object to Starfleet's mining for environmental or specific political reasons, but to say "Don't do that because you may someday be bad!" is overlooking the fact that Starfleet's had crystals for quite some time already.) An ion storm hits the Enterprise just as Kirk and the others try and beam home, and they get diverted along the way, coming into focus in a transporter room that's different from their own in a number of subtle ways. For one, there's a symbol on the doors that's an Earth with a sword stuck through it. And everybody's got new, freakier uniforms. Uhura's sort of wearing a bikini.

Also—Spock has a goattee.

Ooooo. Chills, right?

Everything's changed—sort of—because we're now on the I.S.S. Enterprise, a ship where discipline is extreme and the only real method of advancement is through assassinating your superior officer. Plus, everybody's got that fascist-like salute down pat, and you know that can't be good. Chekov's a back-stabbing sociopath, Sulu's the head of Security and a probable rapist, and Spock? Weeeelll, he's basically still Spock. Only now he's lacking that slight tinge of warmth that makes him so charming in the "real" world."

It's impressive (and a little unnerving) how quickly Kirk manages to adjust to the current circumstances. He inadvertently orders a photon bombardment on the still reluctant Halkans (I guess when you only have the one character trait, you don't get to reverse it in Evil Land), and manages to not immediately expose himself when he finds out what's happening. That's not to say he doesn't find another way to help the morons on the planet below; one of the more unusual aspects of "Mirror," at least to modern eyes, is how the heroes don't ever question their instincts, even when they're in a universe where those instincts would be considered perverse. So Kirk and everybody dedicate themselves to getting back home *and* keeping the Halkans alive. Doesn't matter that these aren't their Halkans, doesn't matter that the main governing body demands these Halkans get toasted. A life is a life, and by golly, it isn't getting dead on Kirk's watch.

"Mirror" doesn't waste a lot of time on figuring things out; with a little (very little) help from the computer, Kirk deduces they were thrown off course by the ion storm, and that their evil counterparts are back on the "real" Enterprise. (We get one great scene with our Spock dealing with a confused, outraged evil Kirk. The bad guys were caught immediately; as Spock points out later, it's easier for a civilized man to pretend he's a barbarian than for a barbarian to figure out which is the salad fork.) The computer comes up with a plan that let everyone get back to where they belong, which leaves each of our heroes with a mission: Uhura's got to go back to the bridge and distract Sulu, whose already made his intentions her way more than clear; McCoy and Scotty have to go to engineering and set up the computer's plans; and Kirk's got to stay alive long enough to make sure all of this goes down.

There's a lot of cleverness in this episode, from the uniform designs ("Make the women's outfits sluttier!") to the various modes of punishment—personnel carry "agonizers," which hurt like hell when turned on, and there's also the agony booth, which presumably hurts like a really painful hell, one of those crazy Chinese ones involving papercuts and rotting wisdom teeth. (Sorry. Bitter.) The politics are also well done; in a few scenes, we realize that loyalty counts for nothing and everybody's always looking for a weak spot (when Kirk stalls on attacking, Chekov immediately takes it as a signal to move in for the kill). Maybe in this universe, the Halkans refusal to cooperate isn't so foolish after all.

About the only person who isn't operating under the pressure of their worst instincts is Spock, and here's another thing to like about "Mirror": it turns out that in a evil universe, Spock has lost none of his intelligence. He's not actively gunning for Kirk, because he doesn't want to be made captain. He's fine as the Science Officer, and has no interest in dodging assassination attempts. Evil Spock is the only person on the I.S.S. that figures out what's going on—well, him and Marlena. And it's not like Spock got to kiss Kirk before he made up his mind.

Marlena is the only major character in this episode who doesn't truly have a "real world" analog. Sure, the goody nice version shows up at the end (you can tell she's nice because she's got her hair towered up), but the first we see of her is in the "evil" universe, although "evil" doesn't really apply here. She's just a "captain's woman," as she calls it, using sex to protect herself and gain favor when regular old talent and smarts don't seem to do the trick. It's not a bad character, and you feel a bit sad for her when Kirk won't take her along on their return trip; but since that would probably mean yanking the other Marlena from her home, it's not really an option.

With all the metaphysical craziness that's going on, it's easy to forget what's probably the episode's loopy creation: the Tantalus Field. Marlena shows it to our Kirk—it's a small screen that lets him observe anyone, apparently anywhere, and kill them with the touch of a button. How it works, who the hell knows. Evil Kirk stole it from an alien inventor, and he used it to rise to power. But things are probably going to be difficult for him when he arrives home at the end of the episode. Good Kirk, showing the same commitment to purpose he's shown every other time he's stumbled across a society he doesn't like, urges the Evil Spock to take action against the illogic of Starfleet and the evil Empire; and to show him he has the power to fight and win, Kirk tells Spock about the Tantalus Field. (Kind of makes you wonder what's going to happen to Marlena afterwards. Two people with a secret can be a dangerous thing.)

By the end, everyone is back where they should be; the computer's projections worked, Kirk convinces Spock to let them go home, and, presumably, the Evil Kirk is getting a righteous helping of just desserts. We even have a final scene where Spock gets the last laugh. "Mirror" is a great example of an episode whose strengths make it easy to look past the occasionally static blocking and plot holes. (It may not be a plot hole, but I'm always confused by the fact that Kirk and the others beam into the other universe wearing their alternatives' clothes. Is this some sort of Quantum Leap thing?) It's hugely influential, thrilling, and, sure, a little silly. I wouldn't want it any other way.

#### **Grades:**

**"The Changeling": B+**

**"Mirror, Mirror": A**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- It's ridiculously inappropriate in context with the rest of the episode, but Kirk's "My son, the doctor," gag at the end of "Changeling" is quite funny.
- In a nod to continuity, it's revealed that the evil Kirk killed Captain Christopher Pike in order to take control of the Enterprise.
- Apparently, in Evil Land, Vulcans are *nasty* revengers.
- Next week, we take a bite of "The Apple," and try and outwit "The Doomsday Machine."

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (157)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:21am

Nomad sent them to warp 10?

Thank God they didn't all turn into salamanders and have sex with each other.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:36am

What's wrong with having sex with each other? Oh wait, Paris is involved, get it...

In no way trolling, but Threshold isnt the worst episode of Star Trek ever. It's not even the worst in that season. It is, however, bloody awful.

Zach, nice writeups as always, and very cool choice of alt-text. Remain In Light FTW!

[Reply](#)

- [Soothsayer](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:42am

It's not crunch time, Mr. Paris. It's time for...something else.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:20am

Justice from S1 TNG must be a contender - i mean normally i LIKE to see oiled up topless men, but really, that's one of the most shameful pieces of television ever broadcast.

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:26am

Whatever that "Space Hippy" one from TOS is called. Yikes!

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:32am

Headin' out to Eden, yeah brother!

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:44am

Spock's Brain seems to be the consensus, but it's more boring and stupid than anything else. For sheer awfulness, I'm going with Jehova. It's hard to top Spock in a hippy space jam.

I haven't seen much of the other series, but the holodeck episodes can be pretty awful. "What if... they were in the holodeck the entire time? Did I just blow your mind?" Plus, I find the idea that the Star Trek officers would spend their free time dressing up as cowboys or sherlock holmes and reenacting books offensively bad.

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:58am

"Eden" was in heavy rotation in syndication when I was a lad, so it is one of the TOS episodes that I've seen the most. I always enjoyed the camp of the whole thing, plus I had a thing for Chekov's girlfriend.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:00pm

The Way To Eden is awful. Nails-down-the-blackboard awful. But I'd still rather watch it 100 times while being forced to sing every damned note of those songs than have to sit through Justice again. Or Haven. Or The Naked Now. Christ, S1 TNG was mostly awful, wasn't it?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:10pm

@Henry

I watched Star Trek Generations when I rewatched all the old movies, and the 18th century holodeck ship scene really made me think "These guys are complete tools." Next Gen was FNBN-for nerds, by nerds and so the cast was one big nerd herd.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:19pm

"A Fistful of Datas" is the cowboy one, but I find that one downright tolerable compared to early episodes like "Angel One", wherein Riker becomes the boy-slave of a matriarchal leader that refuses to grant equal rights to males...yawn... or "Loud As A Whisper" with the hyper annoying mute mediator Riva and his ridiculous Freudian chorus.

At least "Spock's Brain" has that great Vulcan remote control that McCoy uses to propel his body around. I needs one of those.

[Reply](#)

- [Beauty And The Meast](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:20pm

No way! "Cost of Living" on TNG was easily the worst. Absolutely painful to watch whenever I get a glimpse of it.

And I like "Way to Eden"... Stupid as hell? Yeah, but for the sheer psychadelic fun-factor, at least it provides something.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:28pm

"Shades of Gray" from TNG's second season. It was a clip show, for God's sake.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:45pm

What was that one TNG where that kid's parents get killed in some stupid accident, and then Diana Troi basically just counsels him for 45 minutes? I don't think it even had a B Story. Just an entire episode of a 90's touchy-feely therapy session. [shudder]

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:50pm

A well-done clip show, at least.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:33pm

GH, right there with you about Next Gen's touchy feely BS. Only in the 90s would an intergalactic warship have the Counselor as a senior bridge officer with a seat next to the captain's. And why was she able to get away with wearing a lavender jumpsuit instead of an actual uniform 85% of the time?!

One reason First Contact worked so well was that it really deflated (and openly mocked) the whole evolved "no personal conflicts ever" TNG ethos. "The line will be drawn HEYAH!" + Worf's "If you were any other man I would KILL you where you stand!" That's Space Opera baby!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:45pm

You're probably thinking of "The Bonding" from Season Three, where the kid's mom is killed on an away mission by a mine, and some creepy alien boards the ship and tries to imitate her. It was slow as hell, but it did have that freaky alien and a little extra Worf...which is always good, but almost nullified by extra Wesley.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 4:25pm

Yes. It's very useful to have someone to tell you that skeezy, devious, shifty alien is actually lying. Telepathy!

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 5:54pm

"Eden" is funny-stupid. There are a range of "bad" Star Trek episodes that are nonetheless fun to watch, and I'd put "Eden" on that list, along with "Spock's Brain" "Turnabout Intruder" (I know, I know, but it's true, Shatner mincing around alone is priceless) and, um, a few others I can't think of right now.

The ones I can't sit through and really loathe are the mediocre, dull, plodding ones, like The Cloud Minders and The Lights Of Zetar.

Last week's The Omega Glory stands out for pure shittiness, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 8:53pm

She wasn't a full telepath, just an empath. Although later series blurred that even a little, at least when her mom would show up. Yes I know my comment shows how much a nerd I am. And yes I totally had fantasies of doing Troy on the bridge.

As for worst episode. I think Riker runs around a planet with the space ?lesbian? who's being hunted for not being ? straight? has to rank up there. Come to think of it the last couple seasons of TNG got pretty preachy and shitty. I also think the third or forth time they fought Professor Moriarty had to suck.

Honestly with how often the Holodeck malfunctions and tries to kill everyone inside it, or worse the whole ship. You'd think they'd just have the space janitor hang an "Out of Order" sign on the damn thing and Star fleet would stop installing them on there ships.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:52pm

Spock's Brain at least has the classic line, "I should never have re-connected his vocal cords."

Whatever that ep of Voyager where Seven was wrestling the Rock for some goddamn reason— THAT'S the worstie.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 1:18pm

With you on how awful most holodeck screwup episodes were. If they're so risky, WTF are they even legal in the oh-so-Nanny State Federation? Thankfully there were only a few of those episodes in DS9 - which leads to the intriguing notion that the Sniveling Capitalist Swine Ferengi Quark was BETTER at maintaining his holosuits than the Virtuous and Nonexplicitly Socialistic Federation was at maintaining their holodecks!

OTOH, I love the DS9 Season 4 episode "Our Man Bashir", where Julian gets a bit of an object lesson courtesy of Garak and the holosuite's James Bond Knockoff program in the difference between pulpy spy thrillers - and what it really means to be a spy. And Avery Brooks was clearly having a blast playing a Bond Supervillain.... :D

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 3:04pm

Hey, I liked The Empath! A little McCoy aristeia there. What about The Paradise Syndrome?

I AM KIROK!!!

That is the worst episode, bar none.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 3:21pm

"Our Man Bashir"= best holodeck episode ever.

Plus, that baseball episode isn't that bad. It's neither the worst holodeck episode (see any TNG episode where people are in Robin Hood costumes) or the worst DS9 episode (see "Move Along Home." DS9 is my favourite 24-century-set Trek series, but every Trek has its worsts).

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/10/09 6:30am

I actually found Spock's Brain pretty erotic for some reason as a kid...

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/10/09 7:50pm

@edked - Glad to see some more love for "Our Man Bashir". :)

The baseball ep, "Take Me Out to the Holosuite" - was light, but it happened at a point in the show when it needed some lightness. The Dominion War had been going on for several years by that point, Sisko had started his season-long vision quest as Emissary, Jadzia Dax had just been killed and Ezri was a reluctant replacement - so a fun episode sort of broke the heavy-duty drama DS9 was engaging in as they raced to a powerful climax.

[Reply](#)

- [Magnet Man](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/11/09 12:14pm

I can't believe that no one has mentioned the terrible "Masks" from TNG. They really let Brent Spiner do some ACTING! on this one, and the result was just awful.

"Masaka is waiting, captain!"

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/24/09 10:19am

The Enterprise-D certainly had some sketchy-ass holodecks. Which, for some reason, were tied into every important system on the ship. How many times were people trapped inside? How many times did some holodeck character seize control of the ship?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:15am

Spock!

Where is your beard!

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:33am

The swarthy pirate aspect of the evil alternate universe always made that Enterprise seem like it would be a little more fun. Fuck the Prime Directive and all that goody goody shit.

[Reply](#)

- [smething](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:37am

smewhere else

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:44am

At the risk of defending Enterprise, their evil universe episode continued using the sword-through-the-globe icon and had a pretty clever evil empire opening credit sequence. Some nice plot twists in that ep too.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 10:53am

Don't take the risk, Tinsel! Don't do it! It ain't safe! (Says the stalwart Voyager defender...)

[Reply](#)

- [Copper C](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:25am

The son of an air-conditioner technician, he was an A/V monitor during elementary school, got his scuba license in high school, and was a finalist to be a NASA astronaut after graduate school.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:35am

They also did a couple of Mirror Universe episodes in Deep Space Nine, which were awesome cause Kira did a ton of hot girl-on-girl kissing.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:43am

It's a shame that TNG never did a mirror universe episode. But then, how would they depict Evil Riker's facial hair? The mind boggles.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:50am

They never did a mirror-universe episode of Voyager per se, but the episode where a species recounts their encounter with an evil version of Voyager (only to have some back-up copy of the doctor disprove it) was decent.

That said, it was fun seeing Tuvok in DS9's mirror universe.

[Reply](#)

- [Ruler Bulon](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:56am

Selleck 'stache, Visible Man.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:10pm

Nothing wrong with that Enterprise Mirror Universe two-parter...with Tholians and the Consitution-class USS Defiant from "The Tholian Web". I enthusiastically welcomed the return of the Agony Booth.

Speaking of agony, "Mirror, Mirror" may be Chekov's first episode where he is shown screaming in intense pain, which was a wonderful Trek tradition started by writers whom I suspect may have hated Chekov. This continued into the films: he was burned by the V'Ger probe in TMP, used like a toy by the earlugs of Ceti Alpha V in Wrath of Khan, almost died by falling in IV. Poor Russian couldn't catch a break.

[Reply](#)

- [Beauty And The Meast](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:24pm

@The Visible Man - doesn't Tom Riker count? He eventually decided on the straight-up goatee (as opposed to full beard) when he teamed with the Maquis in the third season of DS9.

And am I the only one who appreciates ST:Enterprise? I mean, the intro music was beyond hope, but once you got past that, there were a lot of good episodes there.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:25pm

And to top it off, he had to share a script with Takai!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:41pm

The story was somewhat continued in a series of novels written by "William Shatner." It told what happened with Tiberius Kirk got back to his universe — basically kicking ass and taking names. Chekov (again not catching a break) ended up in an agony booth for 5 years or something like that, until he was a dessicated corpse. Same think with that little Clint Howard character who was so fond of that tranya drink.

And some other shit happened. Novels are another parallel universe.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:41pm

Spelling errors haunt me.

[Reply](#)



- [Soylent Green](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:51pm

The TNG episode "Parallels" dealt with mirror universes, but there was an infinite number of them. According to Wkipedia or Memory Alpha (I forget which) the writers had planned on showing an ISS Enterprise-D, but for whatever reason, the idea was dropped.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:05pm

Herpes, Shatner "wrote" those in conjunction with Judith and Garfield Reeves-Stevens, who were responsible for some of the better Trek novels. As I understand it, the Shat would come up with story ideas and the Reeves-Stevens team would work it up. Presumably he'd get to see and comment on subsequent drafts as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:20pm

B and the M:

I am a TOS/TNG fan that has no problem with Enterprise, despite the theme song. It actually incorporated elements of TOS better than any of the other iterations, and my response to the frequent accusations of canon-tampering/continuity by Enterprise is: Really? Have you seen any of the other shows recently?

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 5:48pm

Enterprise improved massively by the fourth season (in spite of being bookended by the need to conclude the Nazi Lizard Alien cliffhanger, and the horrible, horrible finale), and really seemed deserving of a fifth season toward the end, especially with TOS-continuity funfests like the mirror episode. I even enjoyed it when they revealed that Bashir's reaching explanation for different looking Klingon's in DS9's tribble episode had been right. Sorry, but Voyager is still the all-time worst Star Trek series.

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 8:47pm

Enterprise sucked. It got better towards the last season(the mirror, mirror episode was good). But overall it was more shitty trek. Just like Voyager before it. DS9 was good and I guess it got even better towards the end(I stopped watching it after the 2nd or 3rd season, I always prefered Babylon 5). Really the only consistently good, at least for Trek, Trek series were TOS and TNG. Everything else just started to loose focus of rehash what the other series did.

Also Enterprises biggest flaw was making a prequel that looked way more advanced then original series. I have not seen the new series but it looks like the new movie at least tried to keep the original look of the series.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 8:50pm

Count me among the Enterprise defenders. I just got through watching the whole series form start to finish, really enjoyed it! Several good story arcs in the fourth season, and lots of fun for Trek geeks all the way through.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 9:27pm

If you haven't seen DS9 past the first two or three seasons, you haven't really watched it; that's when it becomes what its fans rave about.

TNG is by no means as good as a lot of people think they remember it to be; insufferable, smarmy and as often as not when I'm watching it now someone will say something so sucky that it will send me lunging for the remote.

Babylon 5 is insanely overrated, and the early CG effects practically make my optic nerve ache.

Finally, it's "more advanced THAN" not "more advanced then." Sorry, but that's my number one internet pet peeve, which always makes people who do it look retarded.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 12:34am

"And am I the only one who appreciates ST:Enterprise? I mean, the intro music was beyond hope, but once you got past that, there were a lot of good episodes there. "

I thought that Enterprise was pretty damn good, and yes, I sing along with the theme song.

And amongst its accomplishments, many episodes of Jolene Blalock running around (literally) damn near naked. Worked for me.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 12:50pm

Agree w/whoever said TNG was insufferably smarmy and self-righteous - though it got better in later seasons when it appears the Federation was starting to implode from pressures like the Borg, the Cardassians, the Maquis going renegade to fight the Cardassians, and the Romulans. Seeing Picard & Crew scrambling to paper over the cracks in the Federation made for some of the show's best episodes, IMO.

DS9 was my wife's and I's favorite of the TREK series. It was about a large group of people working at cross-purposes, often in sharp conflict with each other, but somehow managing to come tokeep the increasingly patchwork Federation together gether when it counted. That was much more dramatically interesting than what my wife calls the "Fix Your Simper" political correctness of TNG.

VOYAGER lost us both with its hoo-hah! writing even before Kes died (or ascended into Heaven, or whatever excuse they came up with to cover Jennifer Lien leaving the show), and replaced her with Robo-Bondage Babe Seven of Nine (sadly, Jeri Ryan proved she was capable of a much more interesting character than they gave her to play). As for ENTERPRISE? Neither of us could get into it, really....

[Reply](#)

- [permazorch](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 7:18pm

@Beauty And The Meast: "ST:Enterprise? I mean, the intro music was beyond hope, but once you got past that, there were a lot of good episodes there."

Well, that's a fatal error for me (intro music being godawful).

Enterprise Showtime: I tune in to channel x.

Enterprise starts with 'the hook' intro (y'know, where we see the opening sex and/or violence): I hate to miss that hook, because then I feel like I'm catching up. (I also hate to miss the opening nanosecond of a movie.)

Enterprise theme music starts: I change the channel in hyper-disgust, or mute it. Unfortunately, as the initial showtimes for Enterprise were near dinnertime (and I was on duty, at least partially), it was hard to re-tune in to the show exactly after the commercial break. Missing the bridge from hook/stinger to storyline meat was unacceptable for me.

After awhile, I just had other, better things to do...

Maybe on DVD...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/10/09 6:38am

Yeah, Check out Enterprise on DVD.

That's how I saw it, all at once and I really loved it (no, of course not the song.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:37am

The Mirror Universe

It's an old idea, but always a fun one. To those nerdlings out there that haven't checked out the Mirror Universe short story collections, do it. They are actually pretty good (especially the one dealing with the after-effects of this episode, Spock's rise to power and the fall of the Empire).

As for next week- The Doomsday Machine. Freaking awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 10:42am

As for next week - The Apple. Not quite so awesome.

Mirror Mirror really is great, and a refreshingly ensemble piece (especially nice to see Nichelle Nichols get her teeth into a few good lines). Ok we could have done without William Shatner's screamingly over the top evil Kirk performance in the "real" universe but I guess we can live with that, it doesn't really ruin anything.

And say what you like about The Slow-Motion Picture, V'ger makes a considerably more credible threat than Nomad's thing-on-a-string approach to terrorising the crew...

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:03am

I thought having that creepy impersonal Nomad floating around amongst the crew added a bit of tension. The someone-walking-around-with-a-100-year-old-stick-of-dynamite-in-a-bowl-of-nitroglycerin - type of tension. One wrong word, one wrong move and Nomad goes apeshit and it's game over. V'ger was so frickin' enormous and impersonal and all-powerful it was a little too over the top. It was like V'ger could dust off the Enterprise and crew with all the tension of a brain dead chimp swatting a mosquito.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:21am

But at least V'ger looked like it acutally COULD destroy a whole planet. Nomad, at a stretch, might prove useful for roasting a kebab above a camp fire.... But yes, it was a TOUCH over the top

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:48am

Yeah, for someone so fondly rememberd, Uhura usually has very little to do. She's basically an extra for most of the series. It's nice to see her in action.

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:50am

A very good point.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:51am

I've always wonderd WHY V'ger needed to be so damn big. For a twenty to thirty foot space probe, having a ginormous 8 KM long ship (or whatever, don't exactly know) seems a tad bit over-zealous. But hey, it made for some neat visuals.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 11:55am

The Way To Eden is awful. Nails-down-the-blackboard awful. But I'd still rather watch it 100 times while being forced to sing every damned note of those songs than have to sit through Justice again. Or Haven. Or The Naked Now. Christ, S1 TNG was mostly awful, wasnt it?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:00pm

Ha! Wrong thread! I shouldnt drink at work, should i? Sorry everyone, I'll post it in the right place...

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:12pm

@Right Wingnut - well, it supposedly had "all the information in the universe" so I guess aside from AI and propulsion sytems, the rest of it was memory storage space.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:13pm

Oh yeah, it also had planet destroying powers, though I have no idea why a probe would need that.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:24pm

"The Apple" isn't terrible, but suffers from being the episode with perhaps the most ludicrous looking natives in all of Trekdom, and that is really saying something.

"It is not a dance...it does not gather fruit...it does not serve Vaal." This became an oft repeated phrase by my brother an I during our formative years.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:28pm

It just doesn't get any better than Doomsday Machine.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:32pm

@ Dumbledore: yeah, that is true. That is what also got me- Spock goes flying into that weird gate that has blocked the Enterprise and goes into the memory bank area, but when the Enterprise does, they find V'ger. I can't figure out how that works.

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 12:38pm

Not to mention that giant gateway looked like a spastic anus.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 1:09pm

It's awesome that there is a small band of fellow lovers of "The Doomsday Machine" out there.

I'm sure they used what I call the "Doomsday Machine" music countless times, but I only associate it with looking down the maw of that giant metal space cigar.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 1:34pm

Great episode, but someone called it a giant space turd, and that is what I saw whenever I looked at it. Almost ruined the whole episode for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 2:04pm

It looks much better in the recent CGI redo, and the battle sequences make a lot more sense.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 2:57pm

It looks exactly like a really cheap bowl I used to smoke out of back in my college days.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Right Wingnut

5/08/09 10:57pm

People, it's obvious: Bald Chick merged w/ Seventh Heaven/ Dudley Do-Right's Chin Guy and they became Orson Welles. V'Ger is Unicorn!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Right Wingnut

5/09/09 3:07pm

I actually kinda liked that part. By the time they got through with their space-gasm, you just wanted to say, "Cigarette?"

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:53am

Non-new movie conversation

So I rented and watched the Star Trek movies for the first time since I was a kid, and I figured this would be as good a place as any to talk about them.

Motion Picture- I get what they were trying to do, it just didn't work. Pretty to look at and listen to, but it honestly put me to sleep as a kid.

II- What can I say that has not already been said?

III- Better than I remember and underrated IMHO. I think I ignored it as a perfunctory stop to get Spock back, but now I appreciate it for what it is - a story of a team willing to pay any price to get a friend back.

IV - not as good or funny as I remember, but hey, nuclear wessles, right?

V-stinks on ice

VI-Super rocking awesome

VII-lame and boring. Just saved (like TNG in general) by Patrick Stewart's GRAVITAS. I remeber the Data emotion

stuff cracking me up, but it was painfully lame.  
VII- super rocking awesome  
XI and X - they did not have them, and I won't bother.

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:01pm

In all of the movies that had Data in them, I always dreaded his close-ups because his makeup was so terrible. I don't understand why they couldn't do a better job with that.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:02pm

Pretty much perfect except III - it's not bad, just very, very linear. Still, Kirks "I'll kill you later" line always makes me smile...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:05pm

Actually Malcolm McDowell is pretty good in Generations. That's all I've got

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:10pm

Watching the first film on a big screen, caffeined up for the slow places, is a great film experience. I'm not saying the film's fantastic, but seeing it on a big screen, lights out and sound blasting, was pretty damned cool. It's a good audio/visual experience that is simply attempting to be too 2001, when it needed more "Doomsday Machine". The reworked DVD version helps, too, since it fixes some of the effects problems, but not Stephen Collins' boring performance, nor Persis Khambatta's heartbreaking existence, I mean, performance.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:36pm

III is actually probably my favorite movie, to be honest. That isn't to say I don't love them all (well, love is a strong word for Insurrection and Nemesis. Those are more like the people you need to be a bit drunk or more in order to find attractive), but III gets a bad rap. I always enjoy them stealing the Enterprise, and the battle with the Klingon's, short as it may be, is great.

Also, the look of shock on Scotty's face when Kirk orders the ship to self destruct is great.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:47pm

Prole - I always liked that line too. a bit of trivia - that klingon (Moltz) was actually played by John Larroquette.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 12:58pm

The "Generations" movie actually had some halfway interesting notions, including that whole Nexus area, outside of normal spacetime, where you could live out your life essentially forever however you wanted it, and you leave a little piece of your consciousness in it. Like a really cool parallel universe, not evil.

Of course, McDowell's actions to re-route the thing to get back into it were ridiculous, since it would have been much easier just to steal a spaceship and fly into it. The idea was good. The execution was crappy.

Another interesting thing about Generations is that in the opening sequence, which features Scotty and Chekov, the lines were originally written for Spock and Bones, but Nimoy didn't want to do it and by that time DeForest Kelley was too sick. You can hear their characters in the lines, if you listen for them.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:05pm

I liked the Klingon chicks in Generations, the Enterprise crash was awesome and McDowell was pretty good. Also, the Stellar Cartography scene is fantastic. I think the only thing wrong with that movie is the Kirk and Guinan parts. Maybe it wouldn't have been great, and a lot of the Data humor moments were groan inducing, but overall, until the planet blows up the first time, I really like it. Of course I am an apologist and even find stuff to like in 5, 9 and 10.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:48pm

Not to beat up on TNG, which hooked me on Star Trek in the first place, but 1-6 and then Generations - you could really see another weakness - techno babble. 6 made sense, all guts, heart, and brain. In Generations I swear every other line involved "rerouting warp coil anti matter dilithium sensor array astrometric isolinear subspace relay modulation trilithium." Its like another language.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:49pm

And running diagnostics.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 1:51pm

The music cue as they steal the Enterprise out of the station in III is an awesome thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 2:04pm

Oh wait, I was so busy making fun of Generations, I forgot to say what I liked. Patrick Stewart is just so good in it. The scene where he talks about his nephew dying in the fire and his "end of the Picard line" speech is achingly heartfelt, as is the Christmas scene (which had high goofiness potential) which was a man looking at the life he could have had and regretting the choices he made. Beautiful.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 2:08pm

I had that on a cassette I used to listen to when I was driving. It's a wonder I didn't get more tickets.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 4:34pm

Generations had potential, but several major flaws, some of which have already been mentioned. A few others:

- a) Picard plays second banana to Kirk, which is not really necessary.
- b) If the Nexus torments anyone who enters it with it's awesomeness, why is McDowell the only one seemingly

tormented by it?

c) The climax is anything but dire...what the fuck are they talking about when they say they have one shot at this? They fuck up, Malcolm blows planet up, they enter Nexus...do over, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 7:03pm

Fuck Deep Space Nine. Slack Babylon 5 rip-off.

Just throwing that out there. I could really not give a shit.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:07pm

THANK YOU, Gentle.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/08/09 11:30pm

The Nexus scene cracks me up, because it reminds me of Monty Python's Meaning of Life. It's always Christmas in heaven!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 3:12pm

You all reminded me - did Guinan just suck or what? She annoyed the shit outta me every time she was on screen.

[Reply](#)

- [Gonzo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/09/09 5:28pm

What was the deal with Data's emotion chip in TNG movies?

First, where did it come from (the one his "brother" had was destroyed)?

Second, in Generations he put it in it was said that it fused with his brain so he'd have to live with emotions. Then in First Contact he turns it on and off at will. WTF?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Soothsayer](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:40am

Law of Unintended Consequences

If I remember right, DS9 took the whole "Evil Spock implementing reforms at Good Kirk's suggestion" thing and ran with it. Turned out 99.999% of the Mirror Universe's inhabitants were evil bastards, and Spock's reforms ended up getting all of humanity enslaved or something.

Which is awesome, and retroactively makes this episode even more awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 11:39am

Mirror Sisko and O'Brien were still good guys.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Soothsayer



5/08/09 11:45am

Putting on my nerd helmet, Spock's revolution actually somewhat succeeded. He knew that the reforms to the Terran Empire would lead to it's collapse and enslavement, but that the government that took them over would fail as well. So, in the very long run, things could possibly work out.

What makes it even more evil-university is the fact that Spock knows it will lead to harsh, harsh treatment to those that were members of the Empire, but goes through with it anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 11:53am

My only problem with the DS9 mirror universe eps is the wigs. They were godawful. Or was it only Bashir who wore a wig? B/c that thing was craptastic.

I also wish TNG had done a mirror universe episode. That would've been interesting. Assuming it would've happened second season or later, would evil Riker have been beardless?

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 1:12pm

Enterprise did a two-part Mirror episode, near the very very end, and they even worked in the Tholians. For a show that I consistently hated, I remember those eps as a series highlight.

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 5:54pm

That two parter is the only unalloyed good thing "Enterprise" ever did. Made me wish they'd do an entire series set in the mirror universe. Though that probably would get old quickly in reality.

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 8:56pm

Yeah but thats because they even changed that god awful opening into a cool ass facist military propoganda film. Best episode of Enterprise. Which isn't really that much of an accomplishment

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Soothsayer

5/08/09 10:59pm

Wasn't that the one where Bakula does the BEST goddamn Shatner impression ever?

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Soothsayer

5/09/09 1:33pm

Actually, the DS9 "Mirror Mirror" follow-ons were either a brilliant illustration of The Law of Unintended Consequences - or a clever riffing on the themes of Azimov's FOUNDATION series.

And yes - Evil Kira predating Cap'n Jack Harkness's "I'll bang anything that moves, including myself!" sexual philosophy by a decade was awesome. Oh, if only Evil Kira and Jack could meet - they'd plot to take over the Universe...if they could both just be bothered to get out of bed first.... ;)

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Soothsayer

5/10/09 7:54pm

@Hanley - which one? Evil Kira and Jack Harkness banging each other into oblivion? ;)

Though given those two, you KNOW they'd have pulled in Iantho, Gwen, Odo, Garak, Rose, Sarah Jane, Worf, Jadzia Dax, and the last two Doctors into a mass orgy....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Kinja!](#)Zack Handlen

9/07/17 2:11am

*This comment or account was deleted on Disqus before The A.V. Club's comments were migrated to Kinja.*

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:28am

I thank Roddenberry once suggested the same thing. he may not have been serious though.

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:32am

I'd think that the Borg would just assimilate the technology and move on. Why modify anything?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:32am

It IS fanwank but it's an intreuging theory. It's not 100% consistant with Borg actions as we have seen them but I supposoe they do, well, adapt, so maybe they used to assimilate old technology from other races, and return the technology to that race so it could remove a potential threat to the Collective (species capable of developing spaceflight equals potential threat therefore eliminate), but as they adapted this method became redundant as they themselves became more powerful. Not aware of anything canon to support it but it's a nice idea

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:40am

Borg? Sounds Swedish.

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:53am

I've always wished they'd followed up on the V'ger storyline and gone in search of this planet of machines that V'ger supposedly stumbled upon. I mean couldn't they have extrapolated V'ger's flight path and sent a ship - the whole seek out new life and new civilizations thing.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 12:12pm

They did a book sequel to ST 4 titled "Probe", where they follow the probe back home. It's a decent read.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 12:15pm

Well it also never occured to Kirk to check up on Khan's Kolony, so he tends not to follow up on his adventures and discoveries.

[Reply](#)

- [Studley Hangwell](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 12:35pm

Yeah, Kirk never struck me as a "details" kind of guy. I put the blame on Spock. He was supposed to act as Kirk's BlackBerry. Logic would dictate that while the captain is occupied with shagging space tail the science officer would be responsible for keeping a check list and tying up loose ends.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:01pm

I always thought a cooler name than the Borg would be The Kevorkians.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Kinja!](#)Zack Handlen

9/07/17 2:11am

*This comment or account was deleted on Disqus before The A.V. Club's comments were migrated to Kinja.*

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 11:45am

They aren't exactly parallel universe stories, but every episode of the Twilight Zone could probably be seen as a precursor, an area of space between this reality and somewhere else, which exists for the writers to produce a half hour (or forty five minutes in Star Trek's case) morality play.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 12:11pm

Jon Pertwee's Dr. Who series did an excellent parallel universe story as well, "Inferno." One of the best runs Pertwee ever had because the Doctor was so completely out of his comfort zone.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 12:32pm

Actually, it's original source is Biblical. In one of the Gospels, Matthew and John fall into a sinkhole and emerge in Mirror Universe Judea...wherein Jesus has a crewcut and just sits around in his carpenter shop masturbating all day.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 1:10pm

Everybody knows the Biblical version is derived from the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh, where Gilgamesh and Enkidu fall into a lake and emerge on the "upside down" shore of it. The same kind of shenanigans ensue.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Kinja!

5/08/09 1:26pm

@ Master Blaster Plaster Caster: So, how do you know my dad?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [wookiee](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:45am

Spoiler Free

I haven't read the article yet, so I don't know if Zack asked for this, but before we get going, can agree to have \*absolutely\* no discussion at all of the movie by anyone who's seen it?

Probably unnecessary because people on here are pretty cool, but thanks anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)wookiee

5/08/09 11:09am

I totally didn't expect the bit where young Kirk fathers Picard's grandfather. I thought that was a bit of stretch.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)wookiee

5/08/09 11:32am

Damn!

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)wookiee

5/08/09 11:45am

And who'd have thought Yeoman Rand would turn out to be a ghost robot from the future?

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)wookiee

5/08/09 11:45am

I haven't seen the movie, so I don't know if you're fucking with us or not. But, if I may quote Star Trek: Generations - "I was saving the universe when your grandfather was in diapers!"

[Reply](#)

- [Beauty And The Meast](#)wookiee

5/08/09 12:27pm

Putting on ultra-nerd-Trekkie hat, they recycled that line Scotty used towards Geordi LaForge in "Relics".

Oh god, is it obvious I haven't been laid in a while?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 6:54pm

The Changeling Notes and Scorecard

No one has mentioned the best/worst line of the episode! Nomad: "What is that unit?" Kirk: "That's a woman." Nomad: "It is a mass of conflicting impulses." But McCoy and Chapel laughing at Uhura as she tries to read the word "blue" is cringe-inducing. By the way, what the hell is "Tan Ru"? Also, I've always like the few hand-held camera moves they used (usually on the bridge) - they were lit darker than the other shots, but always looked cool.

And just for a little Joe Bob Briggs fun...

Scorecard: One (mechanical) mind-meld. One human memory-wipe. One main character death. One main character resurrection. Permanent deaths: 4 redshirts...and 4,000,000,000 civilians.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)meyer

5/08/09 7:05pm

Come to think of it, those Malurians were sort of assholes.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)meyer

5/08/09 7:30pm

Actually, it's Spock who says "That unit is a woman," which makes it worse. I didn't mention it because, well, we've done the sexism thing before, and it's only one line; but I agree, it's pretty terrible.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

5/08/09 7:37pm

It's bad alright, but it made me laugh out loud! One of the fun things about the original series is that, as you mention, it is so mired in 1960s mores that it's fun on that level alone sometimes. (Personally, I'm really looking forward to re-watching the Space Hippies episode).

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)meyer

5/09/09 3:14pm

Dammit, where's the gun from the Hitchhiker movie?

[Reply](#)

- [parkenf](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 10:32am

"Weight" in kilos?

OK so on Terra we weigh cooking ingredients and give the result in kilos, which is right and wrong both, as we are indeed weighing the sugar (using a gravity/spring tension balance), and getting a result in Newtons - the scale then extrapolates on our behalf and gives the results in kilos, which is a unit of mass.

So it would have a mass of 500kg. The vacuum is irrelevant, I suppose you mean "how do you weigh something in zero g", which would indeed be meaningless. Measuring its mass isn't and you can conceive of how it could be done (sensitive gravity probes, or some such, though they'd have to be reeeeeeeeeeeally sensitive to measure something of that size, alternatively you could throw an object of known mass and speed at it and measure the velocities afterwards, though probably not a good idea to throw things at homicidal probes)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)parkenf

5/08/09 10:34am

Yeah, I know the difference between "mass" and "weight," and the episode specifically said "weight"—which makes no sense at all, no matter how you slice it.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)parkenf

5/08/09 12:46pm

You hit it with a beam of something you know the force of and see how much it bounces. Not a problem.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)parkenf

5/08/09 10:53pm

Dammit, I scrolled down here just to snipe at that sentence.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:52am

MST3K

The MST3K version of this is awesome, with evil-Gypsy hitting on Tom Servo, and the Mads having to sit through the film.

"Your agonizer."

"I must have left it in my other pocket!"

"You're supposed to keep it on you at all times!"

"I know, sorry."

"Then step into...the Agony Booth. Wait, this one's out of order!"

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)blasmo

5/08/09 12:15pm

The outtakes of Trace Beaulieu trying to get his mouth around the phrase "matter transference device" are pretty funny too.

[Reply](#)

- [A Rising Ape](#)blasmo

5/08/09 5:34pm

I loved that one, probably some of the best Mike-era sketches they ever did.

Joey, the lemur, friend to mankind!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)blasmo

5/09/09 2:20pm

I remember the MST3K "Mirror Mirror" riff - and SOUTH PARK's, with bearded Evil Cartman as a considerate and caring kind of guy for once. Both were hilarious.... :)

[Reply](#)

- [ChicJanowicz](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 9:11pm

The Doomsday Machine/ST: The Motion Picture  
Zack,

May I offer a suggestion?

When you reviewed "Space Seed" you took the opportunity to also review the film "Wrath of Kahn" because Kahn was a direct sequel to the earlier episode.

When you review "The Doomsday Machine" it might be a good idea to similarly pair it with "Star Trek: The Motion Picture."

In ST:TMP, the "Commander Decker" better known from 7th-Heaven was supposed to be the son of the "Commodore Decker" from TDM.

Both stories are about absurdly large, absurdly powerful death machines.

ST:TMP stole plot points from "The Changeling" — as you note — but in fact it was actually more of a sequel to TDM.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)ChicJanowicz

5/08/09 9:33pm

Hm. You may have something there. I'll think about it.

[Reply](#)

- [meyerChic](#)Janowicz

5/08/09 9:52pm

I think that's a great suggestion and also a nice way to stir up more discussion about the first big-screen Trek extravaganza in light of the release of the latest one (but hopefully with everyone on their best behavior and not spoiling the new one for the rest of us).

Although I disagree with most of the first film vs. "Doomsday Machine" analogies. The film's V'ger was just like Nomad, and the philosophical discussion throughout and the "cosmic mating" at the end of the film are "The Changeling" all the way. The Doomsday Machine was merely a big, scary loose cannon - pure and simple.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:24pm

Mirror Sulu

Ya think the writers were hinting at anything when they made the Reverse Sulu a lecherous hetero?

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)The Quirk

5/09/09 2:39pm

There was never any implication in the series that Sulu might have been gay - he got nearly as many ladies as the leads did, and certainly more than Chekov. And yes, Sulu and Uhura always did seem kind of attracted to each other....

The closest tinge we get is in ST5 when he and Chekov are vacationing together - but then so are Kirk and McCoy, so what can you make of that?

[Reply](#)

- [redward](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:42am

Atari

Did anyone else have the Star Trek Atari game? I only hazily remember it, but I believe that every couple of levels or so you had to fight Nomad in some sort of hyper-difficult 'bonus' round.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)redward

5/08/09 11:50am

Yeah, it was one of the hardest games ever. All you could do was just start firing as quickly as possible when the level started, so the damned fast thing didn't have time to move out of the way.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:51am

goatees. so evil.

When CBS put all of TOS online, I decided to watch every episode where someone turns evil. I didn't regret it.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Henry

5/09/09 7:55pm

I have a coworker in his 40s (say, Mr. Smith) who grew a goatee. Everytime I saw him for about a year, I referred to him (to his face) as "Evil Mr. Smith." Only later did he reveal that he had no idea what I was talking about, and thought that I was just an ass.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 12:53pm

One thing "Enterprise" did well  
"In a Mirror, Darkly."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D.N. Nation

5/09/09 7:52pm

Agreed. The opening credits were pretty great.

Like the opening credits to Watchmen, which apparently you all missed in your rush out of the theater to slag on it.  
(Bitterness)

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 7:25am

*I can't imagine how one would even go about designed a scanning system that could read a whole planet from orbit, let alone half a dozen of them.)*

Design a scanning system that scans a ten meter square and have some millions of them operating contemporaneously, the way contemporary computers can perform x number of operations at the same time. Or have each scan last one billionth of a second and perform them in a queue. Or some combination of each. If anything at all like Moore's law holds, three centuries from now a handheld device like a communicator will have the capacity of something like several thousand times all the computing power currently operating on the planet. A planetary scan would occur practically instantaneously, though, yeah, a shade more incredulity would help the episode, though the musical cue probably helps with that. .

*(how do you weigh something in a vacuum?).*

Measure how much it bends light. That'll tell you its gravity, therefore its mass. Spectography additionally can tell you the material of its shell.

*Kirk tells Spock about the Tantalus Field. (Kind of makes you wonder what's going to happen to Marlena afterwards. Two people with a secret can be a dangerous thing.)*

Star Trek Continues did an episode that imagined events on board the Empire's Enterprise immediately following the end of Mirror, Mirror. Unfortunately, they 'solved' the problem of the Tantalus superweapon by subjecting it to sabotage. It's a non-factor after.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 7:34pm

Mirror, Mirror Notes and Scorecard

Uhura should wear her mirror uniform every week - she looked mighty fine! Even though the mirror universe ramps up the debauchery factor by ten, nobody seemed to get laid...although Kirk is obviously going to correct that situation with the "good Marlene" at the end of the episode. Also, it's interesting that in the mirror universe, the ship's computer has a male voice. Plus, Spock has a weak skull (that jar they hit him with wouldn't stun a child). And what's up with the reference to the "Halkan Prediction" about the evil universe - did I miss something?

The one thing that would have been a lot of fun would be to include a scene where Kirk asserts that he's worried that he and his goody-two-shoes compadres will be recognized as impostors and asks them how they would act in on an evil Enterprise and to act accordingly (Scotty: "Umm...I'd probably drain the ship's alcohol supply and go whoring down on deck twelve." Kirk: "Then go do it. In an insane world, the sane man must appear insane." Scotty: "Umm...OK!")



Scorecard: One mind meld. One Captain's Woman in a nightgown. One agonizer jolt. One trip to the agony booth. Two dead bodyguards. Three redshirts blasted into the great beyond. One very short cat fight. One bout of Kirk/Spock fisticuffs. One bonk on the noggin.

[Reply](#)

- [KROOZ](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 5:43pm

Generations

I too have a lot of love for this first TNG flick. Patrick Stewart's acting really elevates the proceedings, and his style contrasts well with Shatner's. They both look like they're enjoying acting together.

Also, the saucer crashing into the planet's surface is quite well done.

[Reply](#)

- [and the news](#)Zack Handlen

5/09/09 12:22am

swahili

in my travels to Africa I learned that Swahili was developed as a "trade language." The result is that noone speaks it as a first language. Either a tribal language or English would be the first and/or primary language.

[Reply](#)

- [Breakfast Balls](#)Zack Handlen

5/08/09 11:30am

You're wrong!

I love Nomad's reaction shot when Kirk tells him he's wrong. Even though Nomad doesn't have a face and therefore can't really react.

[Reply](#)

- [Nick Dolan](#)Zack Handlen

1/19/14 9:31pm

TYPO. "AWKWARD" IS NOT EQUIVALENT TO "AKWARD." ERROR. IMPERFECTION. STERILIZE. STERILIZE.

I AM NOMAD.

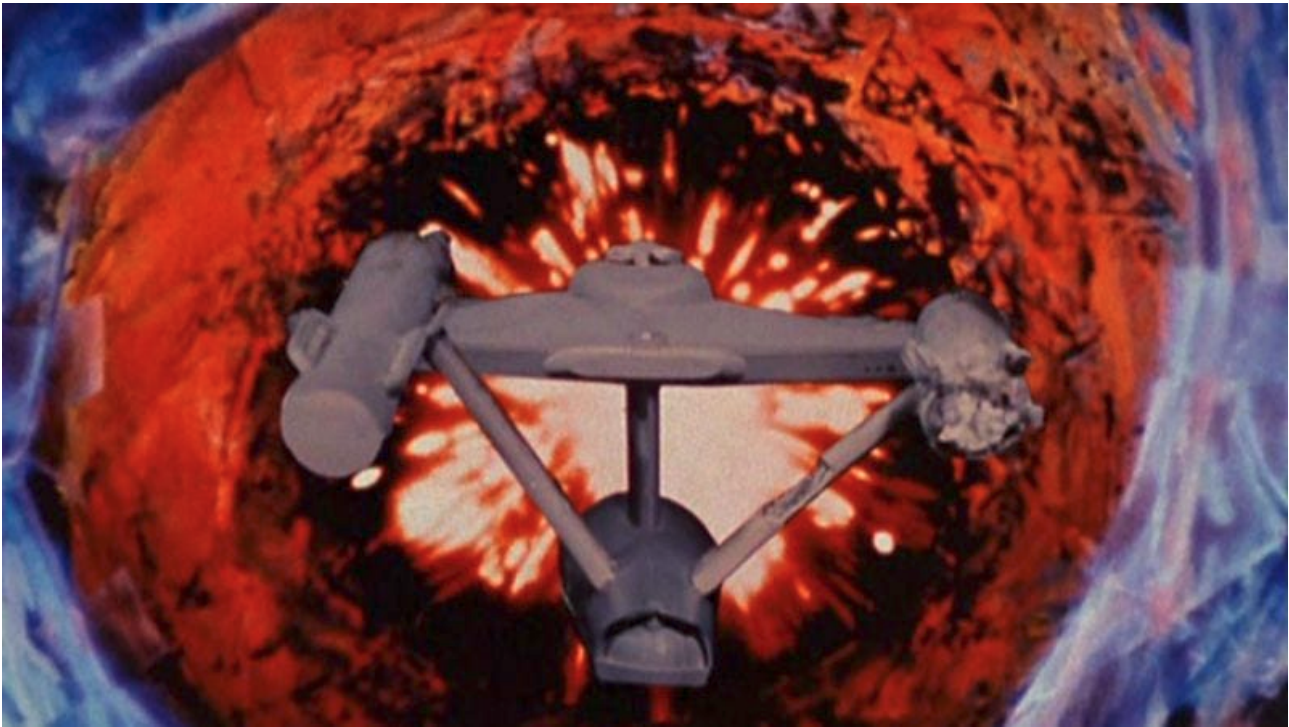
[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Apple" / "The Doomsday Machine"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published May 15, 2009

[Comments \(108\)](#)



I've got a friend—yeah, I'm as surprised as you—and she absolutely *hates* "The Apple." She brings it up every time we talk about *Star Trek*. Sitting down to re-watch the episode, I could hear her ripping it apart in my head (it's okay, I'm medicated), and it's hard to argue against her main point: what business does Kirk have to expel the innocents from a veritable Eden? More than anything we've seen so far, here is confirmation that our Captain is a man with a mission, and that mission isn't just to explore and take notes. He's an old-fashioned kind of hero: he assesses a situation, decides what needs to be changed, and then by god, he pushes up his sleeves and changes it. It's a philosophy as noble as it is arrogant, and it's impossible to imagine the same story being told the same way today. At the very least, we've learned the dangers of trying to make the rest of the world into what we think it should be.

I think my friend is being just a little hard on "The Apple," though, which is more ambiguous than I remembered. Kirk doesn't make his decision without some internal debate (as opposed to McCoy, who's as reactionary as ever), and when he does finally Take Steps, a large part of his decision is motivated by a need to save the Enterprise and the 400 men and women still aboard. "Apple" is at least interested in discussing the situation, even if it does close on a note that basically renders those discussions moot. So give it some points for trying, and for a decent hook; and then maybe take away some of those points for actually having a scene where two infantile grown-ups discover the magic that is kiss. (As in face-sucking. This would've been a really different episode if it had gone the Gene Simmons route.)

Standard set-up: the Enterprise is checking out an unexplored (by Starfleet) planet, and Kirk's down on the surface with McCoy, Chekov, Spock, the latest hottie Yeoman, and the usual assortment of red-shirts. (And man, if you ever wanted to show somebody the ep that made that whole "red-shirts always get killed" joke work, look no further.) Everybody marvels at how idyllic the planet is, with its 76 degree temperature, fertile soil, and climate that remains consistent from pole to pole; this is an implied awesomeness, as the fake plants and rocks are no more impressive than usual, and the red sky overhead (so are sailors delighting *and* taking warning?) doesn't seem all that welcoming.

It could be the sky is a message that Kirk and the others should've heeded quicker than they do, because our first red-shirt gets taken out by dart-firing plant. Further exploration yields explosive rocks ("Fragile, good cleavage," says

Spock; sounds like the perfect personals ad, am I right fellas?), and clouds that toast another red-shirt with lightning. Spock gets himself darts to save Kirk's life, but because of his Vulcan physiology, he survives long enough to get a treatment from McCoy. Lucky for him, too, since when Kirk tries to beam everybody back aboard the Enterprise, Scotty discovers that the transporters are kerfucked; there's an energy source down on the planet that's screwing up the anti-matter pods on the ship, which leaves Kirk and his landing party temporarily stranded.

But somebody said something about a village, right? The energy source that's screwing with the Enterprise is located right next to a bunch of huts, which one of our red-shirts discovers. He gets blown up real good on his way back to Kirk, which drives Kirk to finally take action against the mysterious person who's been following them around for the better part of an hour. With Spock and Chekov on distraction duty (given Spock's strength, I'd be letting him take the assault missions, but I guess that's why I'm not the captain), Kirk gets the drop on a swithe haired man with red skin. One punch later, and white-hair is crying. He doesn't understand what's happened.

Our heroes quickly discover that white-hair (Akuta) and his people are a childlike race who spend their days feeding their machine-god Vaal and the rest of the time, I dunno, tanning and not having sex. (This last bit shocks Kirk and the rest the most; it's funny how the blonde Yeoman is the one who keeps bringing it up. I guess women only have one thing on their minds, eh?) McCoy's medical scan reveals that none of the Adams and Eves are aging, and a few awkwardly placed questions—ah, the sixties, the era of free love when nobody ever used the word sex on TV—reveal that none of them know how to mate. There's some theorizing as to what happens if an Adam or Eve were to die by accident, but the question is never explicitly resolved. Nor do we ever understand how any of this came to be; Vaal never communicates, beyond his eyes lighting up, and none of the locals are bright enough to have memories.

McCoy is immediately outraged by the whole set up. The humanoids don't make their own decisions, they don't advance, they don't evolve; McCoy considers this a form of slavery, and every living creature has the right to be free. Spock isn't so sure. The system seems one of simple back and forth. The natives provide Vaal with food, and it makes sure they live forever, so long as they don't screw around or anything. An eternity of peace, relaxation, and geometric face painting? (Oh, and really cool antennae stuck out behind your ears.) Sounds perfect.

My friend is firmly on Spock's side in the debate, and normally, I would be too; but it's a little harder to judge here, since Vaal's insistence that none of his worshippers get past home plate on the field of sexual advancement makes the arrangement harder to defend. A couple of innocents catch Chekov and the Yeoman canoodling, and decide they want to try it for themselves. (Good thing they didn't taking anything else Chekov did to heart; the guy makes evil universe Sulu look like Cary Grant.) They immediately get lectured, and Vaal gets pissed off—for what? Apart from making sure we follow the Biblical implications, there are no attempts to really understand why Vaal doesn't want the idiots mating.

So the sex stuff is odd. But what really makes it difficult to side against Kirk is that the Enterprise is in direct danger from Vaal. Destroying the computer is the only way to save the ship—and as always, that's Kirk's main goal. (More so than usual, even; he does a lot of soul-searching about how his mistakes led to the deaths of the red-shirts.) Besides, once Vaal realizes that the Enterprise folks are a bad influence, he orders the Adams to kill the landing party—it's not like everybody was holding hands and singing and Kirk just kicked dirt in their faces.

The biggest issue here is that everyone would probably've been better off if our heroes had never beamed down. The red-shirts would still be alive, and the immortals would still be immortal. Sure, they now get to create culture and farm crops and have lots of hot passionate jungle loving, but from what we've seen, this is not a bright race. The place they live in is literally filled with death traps, and even if Vaal's death gets rid of the killer plants and lightning bolts (I can't imagine it affecting the exploding rocks, but who knows), the now-very-mortals have to figure out everything the hard way. Hell, we don't even know if Vaal was the reason the climate was so temperate; how could these morons survive an actual winter?

Kirk's biggest crime is trying to free a society without worrying about what happens once they're free; which is a way too excellent metaphor for American foreign policy for me to be comfortable with, really. McCoy, Spock, and James T. have their usual post-adventure ribbing session, where Spock points out the Biblical connection, and Kirk takes mock offense at being compared to Satan. I got news for you, Kirk. Satan just tempted Eve. He didn't force the fruit down her

throat. (I've always preferred the interpretation of the First Couple's expulsion from Paradise as being a necessary thing—free will and all. So that makes Kirk look a little better, but I still wouldn't be surprised if everybody on the planet wound up dead in a year.)

Monomania is a common affliction in Starfleet; Kirk may have a touch of it in his do-gooding ways, and we've also seen asshole ambassadors and bureaucrats who refuse to listen to reason. Meet Matt Decker, captain of the Constellation. He's got—issues. And as well-motivated as those issues may be, they drive him to put the Enterprise at risk, strand Kirk in a near dead ship, and, perhaps worst of all, repeatedly ignore Spock's attempts to reason with him. Ships and obsessives go together like chocolate and rain; it's just too bad that this time, Kirk and everyone else is standing in the way of Space Ahab.

We all joke about how often red-shirts die, but I'm starting to wonder if just being a solar system isn't a dangerous enough job—a bunch more are wiped out in "The Doomsday Machine," and nobody bats an eye. It's probably safe to assume that's because these particular systems weren't inhabited; either that, or the Enterprise crew is hella callous, because they're a lot more concerned about the fate of the Constellation, floating dead in the vacuum with some obvious battle damage. After being unable to get in touch with anyone on the ship via hailing, Kirk, McCoy, and Scotty beam aboard. The place is a wreck, the engines are largely dead, the phaser banks spent; and there's nobody aboard. No warm bodies, no cold ones, just debris.

Well, okay, there's the one guy. Commodore Matt Decker is alive, but he isn't too happy about it. Once McCoy gets him talking, we learn why: there's a giant *thing* out there, moving through space and destroying planets. The Constellation came across it while doing a routine survey, and were unable to get a message back to Starfleet due to subspace interference. So they tried to attack head on, to no avail. The ship barely holding on, Decker beamed his entire crew down to the nearest planet, third from the sun—y'know, the one that isn't actually there anymore. When the thing attacked, he had to listen to his people die, because the transporters stopped worked, and there was no place for anyone to go.

"Doomsday" is very strong stuff; the threat level is constant, and even when the tension building tricks are obvious (like the Enterprise's transporter woes in the last ten minutes), they work very well. Equally important is the development of Decker's character. We see that he's distraught, we find out exactly why he's distraught, and once he gets aboard the Enterprise and takes command away from Spock, we understand exactly why he does what he does. Unlike the earlier jag offs who've thrown their weight around, this is a guy who's been through what has to be the absolute worst situation for a captain to go through, and you never completely lose sympathy for him even when he starts going off the rails. Hell, I can't imagine Kirk doing much better were their positions reversed.

The episode's few weak moments come when Kirk and Spock try to explain the giant worm tail of death thing. Spock confirms what Decker has told them, as well as pointing out that the thing is headed towards the populous region of their home galaxy (much like in "The Changeling," this is an unnecessary attempt to bring the threat home; it's raised once, and then never mentioned again), and Kirk goes into this long speculative speech about "doomsday machines" that were created largely as a way to *prevent* destruction—weapons whose incredible power made their use almost unthinkable. It's not a bad theory, but it isn't based on anything beyond vague speculation, and it's unny how Kirk has to be the one to come up with it. Makes you wonder if all those rumors of Shatner counting lines were true.

But we have our threat, the Doomsday Machine, and once Decker beams aboard the Enterprise, we have our danger; because while Kirk is stuck on the Constellation trying (with Scotty's help) to get the engines running, Decker is determined to get another crack at the thing that killed his crew. "My mistake before was that we didn't get close enough," he tells Spock and the bridge crew, which, as comforting "I have a plan" lines go, is about on level with "The lion will back down if I just slap it hard enough." The DM (it's not Dungeon Master. I know, it's hard to read that otherwise, but please, try—for me?) is headed toward the Rigel colony, so there are more lives at risk; but as Spock points out, the Enterprise doesn't have the weapon power to successfully fight back. The priority should be to get Kirk, Scotty and the others on the Constellation back on board and then alert Starfleet to the danger.

Decker's having none of that; he seizes control of the Enterprise through the rule book, the one way that would keep

Spock from fighting back, despite McCoy's fervent wishes to the contrary. The first attempt on the DM goes poorly, but Decker still won't back down. Kirk, having finally got the view screen on the Constellation running, has to watch in horror as his ship is nearly destroyed. When the comm. officer (who isn't Uhura for once) finally manages to get through to the Constellation, Kirk orders Spock to take back command. There's an excellent exchange between Decker and Spock—"Vulcans never bluff."—but Decker stands down. Even that won't stop him, though, because while Spock is swinging the ship back to pick up the real captain, Decker steals a shuttlecraft and flies right down the DM's gullet.

One of the things I've always wondered about *Star Trek* is why someone as clearly capable as Spock never rose to the captain's chair, and in an odd way, "The Doomsday Machine" gives us a reason. Spock's arguments against Decker are logical and undeniable; Decker's actions are risky to the point of the madness, and his need to expurgate his guilty clearly clouds his judgment. But if Decker hadn't taken command, and if he hadn't finally suicided in a last ditch attempt to kill his white whale, Kirk would never have come up with a plan to destroy the machine. Kirk's plan is also a little on the crazy side—he's going to fly the Constellation into the DM, blowing up the engines and beaming out at the last possible second—but it works, saving millions of lives. In order to be captain, you need that extra edge of intuition and chutzpah which Spock, with all his rationality, doesn't have.

But that's really incidental. "Machine" is terrific; Sol Kaplan's music matches the actors' intensity, and as silly as it kind of looks, I actually dug the Machine itself. The *Moby Dick* parallels aren't overdone, and the fact the we never find out what the DM is or where it came from works to the episode's advantage. "The Apple"'s lack of backstory reduces the ep to a somewhat tedious allegory, but in "Machine," the few facts work to make the situation more plausible. After all, as we've seen time and again, space is big. Really, really big. And while it's pointless to fear the unknown, a certain amount of caution is advisable. Who knows what could be lurking in all that darkness?

**Grades:**

### "The Apple": B-

## "The Doomsday Machine": A

### Stray Observations:

- Say what you want about the Doomsday Machine, it looks a lot better than *Fantastic Four 2: Lower Your Expectations Still Further's* Galactus.
- Every time I typed "The Apple" for this recap, a voice in my head screeched, "Take a biiiiiiiiite!" Sigh.
- Last week there was some talk about trying to combine the first *Trek* movie with "Doomsday Machine"; it didn't work out, but I'll be seeing the new *Trek* this weekend. Anybody be interested in a write up on *The Motion Picture* and Abrams' film?

## DISCUSSION

- Community (106)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- Eponymous Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:29am

I would definitely like a Motion Picture/Star Trek entry here

Phooooooooooooootoooooooooooooon torpedeeeeeeeeeeeeeeedoeeeeeeeess!

And allow me to concur with the other reader—you're doing a marvelous job, Zack. I wonder if he'll do *The Next Generation* after TOS is finished.

### Reply

- **Prole Hole**Eponymous

5/15/09 11:53am

Dear God that is a wonderful idea, Eponymous. Zach, are you still out there? ZACH!! Do TNG after you finish TOS! Your public demand it!

[Reply](#)

- [Robert Sims](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 12:03pm

You should do an essay on TMP because even though it's slow, plodding and not much happens ("THRILL!!!.....As the crew of the Enterprise.....LOOKS at a viewscreen for forty minutes.....") it's still part of "Star Trek" and one has to do the bad along with the good.

What's "funny" about that movie is that it actually is kind of like the vast majority of the TV episodes in the sense that you can watch everything else without watching the film. In this modern age of season-long story/character arcs, the genius of "Star Trek" (with a couple of exceptions), you can dive in and watch any episode and still get it. TFF is the same way.

Moving onto "The Apple," here's something for you: The native dude who was.....Not Atuk—the one who makes out with the native chick—that was the future Ken "Hutch" Hutchinson of "Starsky &" fame.

Also, Spock takes a LOT of shit in this ep. He gets poisoned by the plant; nearly killed by lightning, force fields and exploding rocks; the natives make fun of his name and the two humans who are supposed to be his closest work associates and friends....strongly imply that he's Satan just because he looks like Satan.

What's Vulcan for "Fuck you."?

The question about how Starfleet promotes their people has crossed my mind from time to time. Unless Chekov, Uhura, and McCoy screwed up royally off-screen, they should have been promoted to Captain (at least) by Star Trek 6 and gotten their own commands. Also, in "reality," Starfleet would have spread out the crew throughout the fleet so all of their eggs wouldn't be in one basket and everyone would benefit from their experience.

.....I've been in middle-management for too long.....someone stop me.....

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 12:07pm

It would be worth doing precicely BECAUSE the first couple of seasons suck like Nancy Spungen on a crack binge.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 1:14pm

The only problem with doing TNG is that thing went on \_forever\_. Also, I'm not sure every episode is write-up-able. We'll see how things stand once we get to the end of TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 2:18pm

@Robert Sims:

I used to wonder why everyone didn't get promoted to Captain as well, but then I figured maybe it had something to do with it being kind of a "career track" in Starfleet. Like, it's very unlikely that a doctor like McCoy would ever be called upon to captain a starship, because rank aside, that's not where his expertise lies. I figure it's the sort of thing where you maybe rack up an amount of time on a ship, in some sort of ship-oriented position like XO or tactical or helm or something, and then you apply for captaincy, take a test (the Kobayashi Maru?), get a review, etc., and THEN they give you the rank and a ship. Like you have to prove that you have that special "something" that would make you a good captain. Spock and Sulu both did it, but even Spock never actually captained a full-duty ship, just a bunch of trainees.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 2:22pm

Zack-

3 seasons of TOS

7 TNG

7 DS9

7 Voyager

4 Enterprise

11 movies

Be careful what you start...

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 3:59pm

It's traditional to dismiss Season 1 but it's really not THAT bad. There's some awful stuff, sure, but 11001001, Too Short a Season, The Big Goodbye, and Conspiracy are all good, and there's a bunch of somewhat lesser but still reasonable ones like The Battle, Coming of Age, and The Neutral Zone.

[Reply](#)

- [Robert Sims](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 4:00pm

@ King Bastard

Yeah, they wouldn't necessarily have to command a starship. They could have the rank and teach at Starfleet or do some other deskjobby things.

The REALLY real answer to my pondering is: You wouldn't have a frickin' show if you did it that way; but where's the fun in that?

And it's conversations like this that got me beat up in middle school, so I'm loving this. HA!!! Take that, Bart Shankles.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 4:34pm

Scott was actually promoted to Captain of Engineering in ST 3, and Uhura was promoted to Lieutenant Commander, which is probably a relatively high rank for an interstellar receptionist

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 4:38pm

Poor Uhura... always the Lieutenant Commander, never the Commander.

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 5:20pm

Zach, I wouldn't mind seeing some TNG reviews. Just do all the Picard, Data and Worf-centric episodes, and screw the rest. Oh, and the one with Scotty.

[Reply](#)

- [kingink](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 5:47pm



Why not just skip TNG and write about DS9 instead? IMHO that was the best series post-TOS and we can discuss how Ron Moore had better hairstyle back then.

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 6:30pm

Wil Wheaton used to do write-ups on TNG, but he stopped in the middle of the first season. I found them really interesting to read, since he has to work through some personal embarrassment to realize that things may not be as bad as he remembered — and, occasionally he has to get past his personal affection for coworkers to realize that some things really were terrible.

<http://www.tvsquad.com/blog...>Here's a link:

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Eponymous

5/15/09 9:02pm

Yes! I loved (and miss) the Wheaton TNG writeups. He strikes a great balance between humor and pretty sharp analysis of what's wrong and right with the first season.

Despite all this, my vote is emphatically for Zack to stick to just the original series. Getting into the spinoffs, each with well over a hundred episodes to compared to seventyish for TOS, is a good recipe for things to spiral out of control. Besides, there's plenty of classic TV out there and some variety's always good: in particular I still want this site to do The Prisoner, since I've been meaning to watch it forever and don't know where to begin (i.e. from what I gather, there's some disagreement on even the matter of what order the episodes should be in).

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Eponymous

5/16/09 12:59am

Yeah, I read Wil Wheaton's stuff on TVSquad. I know he's an occasional contributor here, as well, I'd like to know why he stopped as early as he did.

His insights on some of the truly awful writing of that first season, as well as his reflections on the raw worldwide hatred of Wesley Crusher is freakin' hilarious. Too bad his reviews were dropped before the show found its groove. It'd be interesting to see when HE thinks the show found its groove.

Hey, AV Club Gods (and Zack), get Wil to take another crack at TNG for us.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Eponymous

5/16/09 4:14pm

kingink is on the motherfucker - DS9 is solid fuckin' gold, man, the best trek EVAH.

i am serious. i'm communicating in a dipshit way, but i'm serious about what i'm saying: DS9 really is the best trek. and i don't mean "my favorite", i mean the best example of the idealism and grandeur of space and cultural exploration and the difficulties of interacting with alien ideas.

plus, you have hot chicks making out with hot chicks like four or five times! maybe i'm undercutting my argument here with more of the dipshit stuff...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

5/16/09 10:05pm

I didn't realize Wheaton had stopped and it's a real pity as he was just getting into the swing. Damn, i guess I'll stop stopping by the site every few weeks ot find out if he's got back on the job. Anyone know the story on why he stopped?



I vote on doing TNG, warts and all... I just rewatched to first two seasons (I bought the box set) and I'm surprised that the quality is much better than I remembers (with some real groaners nonetheless). For guy who literally watched the pilot and then bailed on the series until it was long over, I'm quite pleasantly surprised.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Eponymous

5/17/09 6:36pm

So it looks like the conclusion we're headed to is that this site should hire Wheaton again, to pick up the torch from Zack and continue his TNG writeups here.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Eponymous

5/18/09 7:23pm

I'm w/the DS9 writeups over TNG - unless Wheaton wants to do them instead, since it sounds like he's already started?

As for why McCoy, Uhuru, Chekov, Scotty etc. never got their own ships - it's absolutely a question of "career track". In Starfleet, yellow/gold shirts are worn by Command and Navigation - and being a Navigator is considered a steppingstone to command, which is why Sulu ended up with his own ship and Chekov always anticipated getting one. Blue shirts were worn by Medical and Science personnel - which might be why Spock never seemed that miffed about not having his own command. Red shirts were worn by Engineering and Security staffs - which is why Ensign Redshirt always ended up dead! :D

All should have had at least the rank of "Captain" or "Commander" by then, but that doesn't mean most of them were qualified to command starships (Chekov aside). The TNG pilot, "Encounter at Farpoint", gave us DeForest Kelly an old-age makeup cameo as "Admiral McCoy" - but given he never showed any aptitude or inclination to command so much as a shuttlecraft, I suspect he was probably Starfleet's Chief Medical Officer by then.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

5/18/09 8:47pm

Boy, I'd really like to know what WXheaton's email is... I'd love to give him a (friendly) kick in the keister to get back to work.. Book or no, he's got a lot to say, in an entertaining way, and he was just gettign good at what he was doing...

Seriously, where did you fin his address. i couldn't at the TV Club, or whatever it's called where he was writing disguised as a pimp (Yes, I'm not making this up!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:19am

To answer your question,

Yes, somebody is interested in a MOTION PICTURE/Abrams' film write-up. Very much interested.

I'll have to file it away with all my other links that I'm saving until after I actually make it to the new movie, but I assure you I shall read it thereafter.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Dino

5/15/09 11:32am

The Motion Picture and the new film? Yes, please.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dino

5/15/09 11:51am

Dino you speak for all of us. Well me.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dino

5/15/09 11:52am

Most definitely interested in a write up of The Motion Picture and of the new Star Trek. Hell, while you're at it, why don't you pile on the other Original Series movies onto your busy, busy plate? We can excuse you from Star Trek V, though.

[Reply](#)

- [inanna](#)Dino

5/15/09 11:56am

I too have only started watching these because of your writeups (thanks!), and I would be interested in your opinions on the new movie, especially as somebody so currently immersed in TOS.

Will you make it up through the ranks and start on TNG anytime? I watched them as a little kid, and so my memories of them are as fuzzy as my memories of Sesame Street, but I remember really enjoying those too.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dino

5/15/09 12:02pm

HELL YES.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Dino

5/15/09 12:18pm

A write-up would be great. I wonder though, would you go with the theatrical version of ST-TMP or the recent directors cut?

There is a sizable difference between the two in terms of content and quality.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Dino

5/15/09 12:22pm

I own the director's cut, so I'd probably go with that.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Dino

5/15/09 3:52pm

Ebert just posted his original TMP review. It's compared favourably with 2001. Interesting contrast with his snarky review of the current film.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dino

5/15/09 4:20pm

I know it's a dead horse, but +1 on the TMP and ST write-ups

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Dino

5/17/09 10:44am

I re-watched ST:TMP in a fit of ST mania, and again it struck me as being better than its reputation would have it. It's not exactly Star Trek, no, but on its own terms it's at least a striking orgy of classic Doug Trumbull effects. TMP had a much higher budget than the next several TREK movies, and many of the sequences still look amazing (at least in the

Director's Cut).  
Those Space P.J.s have gotta go, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)Dino

5/18/09 1:50pm

I think Star Trek V should be recapped here. I wouldn't mind seeing it wrecked, Zack style, although this guy is the current frontrunner in a crowded field:

<http://www.jabootu.com/star...>

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Dino

5/18/09 8:00pm

@Loose Stool - NOOOOOOO!!! I read that ST5 writeup you linked to, and it reminded me how totally I'd flushed that movie from my brain!

Teh Suck! It BURRRRRNNNNSSSSSSSS!!!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [DCRJ](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:28am

The Doomsday Machine...

freaked me out pretty badly as a kid. Yes, I was afraid of the flaming Space Bugle. But the idea that there could be a machine out there somewhere that could just wipe you out in a minutes notice is pretty creepy. Plus, insane man taking over the Enterprise.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 1:52pm

But didn't the lighthearted banter at the end of the episode ease your terror just a tad? Spock n' Kirk are contemplating whether there might be more DMs roaming around in space and Kirk grins and says, I hope not! I found one to be ... quite sufficient! \*studio audience laughs\*

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 2:35pm

That happens alot with these episodes. Millions of people die, and they just add a joke or comment at the end. That's the way Tv worked back then — no worries about continuity from show to show, since there was little chance of repeat viewing until syndication really kicked in in the late 60's. The way the show should end is the way "Best of Both Worlds" on TNG ended, with Picard's worried look out the window, and the realization that he will never be the same, thus denying complete closure.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 2:51pm

Man, I have to got to stop typing so fast.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 4:03pm

Scariest Trek close-out ever:

Conspiracy, from TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [FortyTwo](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 6:27pm

The conspiracy did come up again in TNG, but it was in passing; in "The Drumhead," Judge Satie is introduced as the person who rooted out and exposed the conspiracy, which is part of the reason why people were so willing to trust her when she began her witch hunt.

But I agree, it didn't live up to its potential. "Conspiracy" was chilling. I think that by the time they could have returned to the idea, TNG had already taken on its philosophical, uplifting tone, and the action/thriller that could have been just wouldn't fit.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 6:31pm

a lot of later episodes ended on a rather downbeat note though. usually, but not always, having to do with a woman.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 7:25pm

Another untouched thread that could/should have been huge: the episode that showed that all the humanoid species in the galaxy were from a common ancestor. Roddenberry kept religion out of the show, so the ramifications of the discovery were never really explored. At the water cooler the next day I was the only geek who thought this was an enormous development. Swept under the rug.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 9:45pm

@DCRJ, Me too. The idea that there could be a planet killer out there wondering around messed with me as a kid. Part of what made it frightening was it was on automatic, there was no reasoning with this thing. Its a really big fire-and-forget weapon. In the '60s a weapon that could destroy planets was a new and disturbing idea.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 10:43pm

There was the no-stopping-it Doomsday Machine in "Dr. Strangelove".

Cue Vera Lynn.....

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 11:05pm

Weren't Harrison's (? Screw it, it's too late at night to go through google) Berserker stories based on just this premise?

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)DCRJ

5/15/09 11:07pm

Fred Saberhagen, goddamit.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:52am

Anybody know what a commodore is?

This always bugged me. It seemed like a easy way to get someone else who clearly was captaining a ship to outrank Kirk. But I think in the Navy or whatever, traditionally the more senior captain always has rank. This seems necessary because someone always has to be in charge.

And then, it seemed that Commodore was not really picked up again by ST, in favor of everybody being an admiral (although TOS did have Commodore Wesley). So WTF?

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 12:06pm

In British naval history, a Commodore is the rank betwixt a Captain and a rear-Admiral (fnar fnar). So he's like a mini-Admiral, and therefore it's pretty much legit for him to... er... go batshit mad and try to fly the Enterprise at a killing machine. I suppose.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 12:12pm

Well, OK, but were there a lot of Commodores? I guess Hornblower was one, and we all know about Rodenberry and Forester, but it seems to have become a lost rank in Starfleet.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 12:24pm

Commodores generally command small groups of ships, they can command a single ship but the command is often temporary.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 1:54pm

Commodore Crunch?

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 4:23pm

Lionel Richie was in the navy?

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 4:56pm

In The Menagerie, Kirk mentions meeting Pike when the latter was promoted to Fleet Captain, a rank that never gets mentioned again. Presumably it would have been between Captain and Commodore?

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 6:38pm

i move that the word betwixt should be used more often on these comment boards.

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/15/09 8:25pm

Commodore was a real rank in the USN until the 80s, when it became Rear Admiral (Lower Half) - which is the most awesomely named military rank ever.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/16/09 3:29pm

I loved the Simpsons where in speaking of wedgies Milhouse referred to the "Dreaded Rear Admiral". On the commentary, the writers noted they just made that shit up, but its almost too awesome not to exist.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/16/09 9:56pm

Rear Admiral (lower half) puts me int he mind of a Pantomime Horse for some reason...

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/18/09 6:53pm

I thought "Commodore" was still a valid military rank, Dired.

It always drove me nuts that everybody in Starfleet goes from Captain to Admiral, without a stop at Commodore (the naval equivalent of a Brigadier General, or so my Dad's Army ToO claimed)....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 12:11pm

And also on Matt Decker...

Also I'm trying to get a snippet of Kirk talking to Matt Decker in TDM, "Matt, we need you! Don't do it!!"(paraphrased) so I can make it my ringtone. Yes it's my name and that'd drive all the chicks WILD when they hear that.... won't it?

Anybody help me out with that?

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)The Pizza Monster

5/15/09 2:24pm

I don't think anyone can help you. You're beyond help.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/15/09 3:34pm

Guilty.

Damn you Kahn.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

5/15/09 8:30pm

Khan! Khan! And with a Spock avatar no less. [looks at feet, shakes head]

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/15/09 10:44pm

Jammer, you just made Chief Engineer. Thanks pal.

John Barleycorn, my avatar is the Pizza Monster and Spock ruined the picture trying to get all up in my motivations for killing miners and red shirts. That's MY biz. [looks at burned holes in floor, shakes rock- like mass] ha

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Pizza Monster

5/16/09 12:05pm

No

Spell

I

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

5/16/09 3:28pm

Well played, Tinsel. [Tip of hat, wink of monocle]

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)The Pizza Monster

5/16/09 4:25pm

the first trek novel i ever read was Enemy's Ally by Diane Duane and i loved the hell out of it for all kinds of little details, like red-haired vulcans and some actual strategizing about tri-d chess and innovative uses of the transporters in the mess hall and cool-ass romulan warbird info... but the very, very best part of the book was that one of the newest crewmembers on the Enterprise was a little adolescent horta that kirk nicknamed Ensign Pizza.

gorn are still the best trek aliens but horta are a close, close second. followed by jem'hadar, cardies and, well, humans, i guess.

humans can be cool! cooler than fuckin' tellerites, that's for sure - those bastards creep me the fuck out.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

5/16/09 9:52pm

Who wold win in a fight between, the Pizza and Flying Spaghetti Monsters?

The mind reels!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/18/09 9:58am

Richelieu Jr., we come in a box that says

You've Tried The Best

(insert picture of Neelix throwing spinning dough in air)

Now Fry Like The Rest

Free deliveries this side of the Neutral Zone!

Wow udjibbom it's all come full circle with the Ensign Pizza character, I'm picking up that book if my brother(the REAL Trekker) doesn't have it already. Hilarious.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:56am

## The Doomsday Machine

I never realized how many people loved this episode as much as I did. James Doohan loved this episode the most for the actor who played Commodore Decker.

Those last ten minutes of the show or so are awesome even by today's standards- Kirk getting nervous as the Constellation gets closer to the Doomsday Machine, Scotty feverishly working in the Jeffries Tube to get the transporter working- and the music isn't making it less tense as well. One of the best episodes of all Trek, in my humble nerdling opinion.

### [Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Right Wingnut

5/15/09 12:45pm

It was William Windom, and if you look at his IMDB, he's as about of a classic "Hey It's That Guy!" was you can possibly imagine.

Over a half-century as a working actor. That's a career.

Also, Wingnut, I couldn't agree with you more about the awesomeness of this episode. It has everything you could possibly want from Star Trek.

### [Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Right Wingnut

5/15/09 1:56pm

It's the best of TOS. Its pacing is perfect (pacing being a serious problem in a lot of other episodes). Plus, of all the dozens of civilization-threatening forces the crew faced on that series, this one actually *\*looks\** evil.

### [Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Right Wingnut

5/15/09 2:37pm

I love how Shatner underplays the tension towards the end: "Gentlemen...I suggest you beam me out." Much better than frantic yelling, which would be the norm in most cases. It's obvious how much he trusts his crew to get him out of there in time.

### [Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Right Wingnut

5/15/09 4:26pm

I think Picard had a shout-out to that scene in one episode where the ship he was on was about to blow up. "Now would be a good time, gentlemen."

### [Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)Right Wingnut

5/15/09 5:04pm

This ep is definitely in my top 5 of TOS, and William Windom's performance is a major part of that. You can practically hear the screams of his dying crew echoing through Decker's head every time he's onscreen.

### [Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Right Wingnut

5/16/09 4:20pm

this episode is good and all but are you nerds really gonna try and tell me this is better than kirk going hand to hand with a fucking space dinosaur and re-inventing gun powder to pop a cap in said space dinosaur's ass?!

Arena is the best episode of trek and the gorn is the best alien on trek - sukkut, nerds!

[i can call you nerds because i'm a nerd too.]



[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Right Wingnut

5/18/09 6:50pm

That's okay - apparently he actually time-traveled to the 1960s and shacked up with Barbara Luna! :D

Oh, my Inner Geek is raging right now....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [KROOZ](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 7:55pm

Many Doomsday Machines

The concept of ancient alien war machines still roaming the galaxy was lifted from Fred Saberhagen's Berserker stories.

TOS had some great guest stars (Glenn Corbett, William Marshall, Robert Lansing, spring to mind among many others) but I thought William Windom really nailed it in this one with as Commodore Matt Decker. He seemed like a real guy, in a real Starfleet, who'd had real adventures on the Constellation with his crew. A multi-talented actor who died too young.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)KROOZ

5/16/09 12:59am

Died too young? Windom is still alive and in his mid-80s.

Also, there was another (former) Fleet Captain: Lord Garth (the late great Steve Ihnat) in "Whom Gods Destroy," season 3.

My wife and I saw the syndicated cut of "The Cage" a few weeks ago (the Remastered episodes are shown at 2 a.m. Sunday nights around here). She was quite surprised (i.e., she'd never seen "The Menagerie"); she liked what she saw, but I had to tell her that the cut version was more like "The Cage's Greatest Hits," given that the uncut version is some 70 minutes long.

I agree, better to review The Prisoner than TNG; a nice brief 17 episodes. But be sure to properly research how and why the series turned out the way it did - one good source book from the early 1990s is The Prisoner Companion, and I'm sure there are others.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)KROOZ

5/16/09 9:45pm

No way! TNG!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)KROOZ

5/18/09 6:42pm

@KROOZ - interesting, because STAR TREK: PHASE II (a ST: TOS fan follow-on series made w/Paramount's completely deniable blessing) had pushed Windom's cameo as a very old Decker in their "In Harm's Way" episode as being his "last performance".

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

5/18/09 9:55pm

Next Review

So, Zack...should we be watching "Cat's Paw" and "I, Mudd" or "The Motion Picture" (Director's Cut, hopefully) for this Friday?



Yep - like to get your take on Abrams's reboot of TREK, and a compare&contrast w/the old series or STAR DREK: THE MOTIONLESS PICTURE.

Saw it last week - loved it while watching it, but had some major "WTF?" moments afterwards....

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 12:18pm

For the Nabin fans out there...

Holy apple

Sacred apple

Take a little chance,

Get into a trance,

And join me in the apple dance.

[Reply](#)

- [mmy](#)Bob K

5/15/09 1:31pm

It's a natural, natural, natural desire

To meet an actual, actual, actual starship captain.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Bob K

5/15/09 2:38pm

Oh, where has love gone, where has love gone?

<http://40til40.blogspot.com...>

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:20am

Abrams, yes. Wise, no.

Definitely would love a write-up on the Abrams ST. Don't need to bother doing TMP though, waste of cyber-ink.

Especially good recaps this week, Z, nice job.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/15/09 1:16pm

Cyber-ink - cink?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/16/09 10:20pm

Wise, ues. Great, great director, sorry he was so ill-adapted to the ST universe (though i wonder how much of his reverence was imposed...?)

[Reply](#)

- [Mike Gregg](#)sZack Handlen

5/19/11 3:10pm

William Windom

Wait what? No specific shout out to Windom for his glorious scene-shredding as Commmodore Decker? He's easily in the top tier of all guest stars on TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [Cooking With Cranston](#)Mike Greggs

7/31/16 1:40am

Just watched this again recently. A great performance indeed.

Also, watch *The Doomsday Machine* and then watch *Venture Bros. "Careers In Science"* and tell me Colonel Bud Manstrong doesn't remind you of Matt Decker.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:15am

Sexy Chekov and the Yeoman

He clearly wants to take her wirginity.

[Reply](#)

- [P.G. Roadhouse](#)The Visible Man

5/15/09 12:17pm

"Wic-tor, Wic-tor (aw crap)"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/16/09 9:42pm

Doomed Science Exhibit

I loved, loved, loved both these episodes as a kid, though DM probably comes out on top (with Balance of Terror and COTEOF) of my list of childhood fave episodes. I loved the cigar-like shape of the DM and the idea of it laying waste to everything in its path... It really creeped me out...

As for Vaal, I thought the idea was so interesting, that in my little mad-scientist mind I conceive the idea that it wouldn't be a bad idea for a planned society. I even built a scale model to show how you could make a self-sustaining community out of this false god that would power all these good things (I was a bit foggy on the details, but details are for the little guys, am I right? I said, Am I r—... oh screw it. you're just as bad as My teacher, Mr Peccorelli)..

I built a little scale model with a Vaal whose eyes lit up greenly, and a little fire could be lit before him... The only problem was converting followers for my society... I didn't have any luck, but this was before I saw the Scientology personality test thing; Today I'm sure it's be a big, big success...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

5/15/09 11:46am

The Apple

When I started reading this, I thought you were reviewing "The Way To Eden" and I got upset just thinking about it. Hippies! Spock doing Musical Theater!

Then I realized you were talking about the Vaal episode, and I distinctly remember the white faced guy whining about getting hit. (Jeez, learn to take a punch, wimpy).

Then I was reminded of the episode where Kirk goes all native american.

And I concluded that Star Trek, which I love, has LOTS of episodes that suck for exactly the same reason-whiny peaceniks.

I like explosions. I like space. I like fisticuffs. I like fisticuffs in space as a precursor or result of space explosions. I'm willing to put up with the extensive boardroom discussions (I'm looking at you TNG) if it leads to fisticuffs and/or explosions. But the rest of it.. [looks at feet, shakes head]

[Reply](#)

- [Anthony Rimell](#)Zack Handlen

8/24/16 12:34am

I real is this is a LOOONG time since the original comments (hey, in 2009 we here in Christchurch New Zealand hadn't even had our earthquakes!!), but one thing I want to mention about 'The Apple'. For all the simpering, 'I think I want you' from our female yeoman, she absolutely kicked butt when the fighting started!!

It's a great reminder of the curious contradictions of TOS. Short, sexy skirts, check; 'I'm a girl so I'm easily scared', check: but when it come to being part of the crew the women were fully fledged star fleet officers.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [sputnik7](#)Zack Handlen

9/05/11 1:07pm

Best dialogue for chewy pathos in "The Doomsday Machine":

Decker: "They say there's no Devil, Jim...but there is. Right out of Hell, I saw it!"

Kirk: "...Matt, where is your crew?"

Decker: "On the third planet."

Kirk: "There is no third planet!"

Decker: "...Don't you think I know that...?!"

And scene. Cue rambling and sobbing.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/16/09 9:35pm

\_unny Spelling

Few grammar and spelling mistaked there, such as "unny" where I assume you meant 'funny' and, "his need to expurgate his guilty clearly clouds his judgment" where I imagine you meant 'consciencee in there somewhere...

And forther reviewsof the films, are you kidding? Hell yeah!

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/05/16 11:58pm

SCTV Farm Film Report reference.

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek: Star Trek: The Motion Picture / Star Trek*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published May 21, 2009

[Comments \(271\)](#)



I grew up watching *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*; I started long before I had any concept of what good or bad meant, and for the longest time, the *ST:TMP* wasn't so much a movie as it was a memory I occasionally revisited. It never even occurred to me to have an opinion about it. There were parts I didn't like, exactly, but I always assumed that was some fault on my part. It's just that I wasn't ready to grasp the amazingness of a ten minute sequence where we *looked* at something.

I've come back to the movie since growing a spine, critically speaking, and while I can understand the fondness some people have for it, it's really pretty lousy. *TMP* suffers from two big problems: it's waaaaaay too long, and it fails to capture the charm of the original cast. There are a handful of good ideas, and a few stunning visuals, but nothing can really shake the tedium that sets in even before the opening credits. (This movie has an *overture*, for crying out loud.) *Star Trek* can be thoughtful, socially relevant, thrilling, but the one thing it always has to be is fun. And there's precious little of that here.

After a decently spooky prologue in which a giant space cloud destroys a group of Klingon ships, we're reintroduced to James T. Kirk, scrambling to get his ass back on board the Enterprise. See, Kirk's been promoted out of the field—he's kind of old now—but he's determined to regain his captaincy, and this latest giant-space-cloud crisis is the perfect opportunity. As always, the Enterprise is the only ship available to check out the threat; and it's a threat that's headed towards Earth, so it's probably not something that can be easily ignored. Starfleet wants an experienced commander running things, despite the fact that the Enterprise has just been retooled, and Kirk forces his way to the top of the list. Now he just has to let the current captain know he's gone.

There's nothing wrong with Kirk wanting to be on the Enterprise; the universe doesn't seem quite right with him behind a desk. But *TMP* paints James T. as an aggressive ass from the very start. He's supplanting someone else (someone who may actually be better equipped for the job), and he's bizarrely pissy about it too, like he lost his sense of humor between now and the end of the third season. We're supposed to like Kirk, not vaguely tolerate him. Honestly, *nobody* in the movie comes off that well. McCoy does okay, and the secondary crew are more invisible than anything else, but

Kirk's a sourpuss, and Spock, generally the voice of reason in all things, is distant and distracted. Worse, the two new characters, Decker (the man Kirk supplants, played by Stephen Collins) and Ilia, his doomed former love (Persis Khambatta), are boring, shallow, and don't fit in well with the regular lot. In a stronger movie, this wouldn't be as much of a problem, but given the amount of time we spend watching people watch things, that lack of charisma turns an already slow-moving pace into a crawl.

And how about that story, huh? As mentioned before, it's a riff on the second season original series episode, "The Changeling," but while that ep had Kirk and Spock figuring out the problem at the twenty minute mark, *TMP* takes a seemingly endless two hours to arrive at the point. Until then, we get a lot of special effects (some good, some really not good at all), a handful of so-so philosophical discussions, and one decent twist—the Xeroxing of Ilia. Reportedly, when the producers were trying to put together a *Trek*'s first big screen outing, they demanded it be "big" and "epic." They has the first part right; it's just that there's nothing to fill all that emptiness.

Kirk gets his Enterprise, anyway, and we get to see him getting it. We even get to see him flying over to it, in a sequence that's easily the movie's most irritatingly indulgent; we see the shuttle craft, we see the Enterprise floating in space in a docking bay, we see the shuttle craft approaching the Enterprise, we see the Enterprise has sides and stuff, we see the shuttle craft circling it, we get to see the ship again in case there's anybody watching who blinked and got scared it had disappeared, and so on. It's a scene that aims for awe and fan goodwill—holy shit, that's the Enterprise up there on the big screen!—but overshoots the mark and becomes absurd. About the only thing to recommend it is Jerry Goldsmith's typically excellent score.

While the docking sequence finds the movie at its low point in terms of pacing, the mistake it makes is one that director Robert Wise makes again and again throughout the picture. Wise, whose eclectic career stretched musicals like *West Side Story* to *The Haunting* (arguably one of the greatest horror movies of all time), seems like a good match for *Trek*; he did direct *The Day The Earth Stood Still*, which is about as good as thoughtful cinematic science fiction gets. But his work here never really gels into anything significant, and the director's cut released to DVD doesn't fix what's essentially broken.

Eventually Kirk boards the ship, and he gets his crew—including a cantankerous-as-ever McCoy, who looks like he just came from a hippy commune. A tragic transporter malfunction kills off the original science officer, but hey, Spock got some mental messages from the giant-space-cloud, and meets up with the Enterprise to offer his services. So everybody's together again, including Scotty, Uhura, Chekov, and Sulu, not that any of them get to do much. They head towards the space cloud, and one near fatal warp incident aside (that goes on for ages and has nothing to do with anything; it just reminds us that Kirk doesn't know enough about his retooled ship), they arrive unscathed. Then they go inside.

Of *TMP*'s indulgences, the Enterprise's slow creep to the heart of the disturbance is the easiest to defend. It's a clear attempt to ape (heh) the mid-melting beauty of Kubrick's *2001* inside-the-monolith scenes, and it doesn't really succeed; the effects work isn't consistent, and the fact that every minute or so we cut back to the bridge, where Kirk and the others are staring open-mouthed, undercuts the alienness. But it comes close, and some moments work better than others.

The best of these moments is when Spock decides to leave the ship to do some exploring on his own. The reasons are... ill-defined; something about him seeking answers and so such. (There's all this silliness about Spock having some kind of connection with V'Ger, the consciousness at the heart of the cloud. It could be a commentary on the affinity the Vulcan has for logical beings, but it comes across more as forced mysticism.) But whatever his reasons, the image of him floating in a space suit through a series of models and images haunted me as a kid, and is still surprisingly effective even today.

To continue the praise, Ilia's disappearance and resurrection works well. To moderate that praise considerably, it doesn't work as well as it should; Khambatta isn't a strong enough actress to make much of an impression before her transformation into V'Ger's avatar (she isn't helped that her only character trait per the script is "fuckability"), and her relationship with Decker is never as involving as it needs to be to justify its conclusion. For any *Angel* fans out there,

remember Wesley and Illyria? That's what this could've been; sure, it could never have had the same depth or history, but *any* depth would've been nice here. Decker doesn't have the slightest reservation about getting friendly with the Stepfordized version of his former flame, and his final decision—to join her in the glory that is V'Ger and save the world—is ill-motivated enough that you can imagine him flipping a coin off-camera right before. "Okay, heads I go with the fake bald chick who sort of digs me, tails I go back into the seminary and have an improbably hot daughter."

But at least he does something. Kirk's biggest contribution is bluffing the death cloud when it finally arrives at Earth; it's an in character moment, and reasonably exciting, but for the movie's climax, he, Spock, and McCoy are sidelined into delivering exposition and commenting on the danger. V'Ger turns out to be one of the Voyager space probes NASA shot out into space. It got damaged somewhere along the line, and found a planet of machines that fixed it and gave it its astonishing power. But apart from information gathering, it has no purpose; the will to sentience and life, but not the necessary tools. So it's up to Decker to make the ultimate sacrifice, and join with fake-Ilia to become part of V'ger; their love (it being the fifth element and all) supposedly lets the machine to evolve to the next level.

This final release should be triumphant. It isn't. The only happy bit in the entire movie comes at the end, with Kirk in his captain's chair and the threat resolved. Sulu asks him where to next, and Kirk gestures towards the viewscreen. "Out there," he says. It's a light, carefree line, and it always stuck with me; it's just too bad we have to wait so long to hear it.

I had reservations about the new *Star Trek* film. Any reasonable person would. The same characters as the original series, but with a new cast? The whole "It's hip, new, sexy!" ad campaign? Even worse—that awful "This is not your father's *Trek*." tagline. The franchise needed some new ideas, no question (I suppose it could've been left to die with some dignity, but no way are we going to do *that*)(admittedly, after *Star Trek: Nemesis*, there wasn't a whole lot of dignity left), but everything seemed to indicate the worst possible "re-imagining," all flashy, hollow stupidity, with no substance or craft behind it.

It turns out, I was only a little right. The new *Trek* doesn't have much substance—it occasionally nods at complexity, but doesn't have the focus to follow through—but I don't think I'd go so far as to call it stupid. Brash, yeah; sometimes ill-advised, with a script that really could've used a few more drafts, sure; but stupid? Nah. There's a good amount of care here, and a generally likeable cast. I've got reservations with this one as a standalone, but as a franchise starter, it's a success. I'm definitely looking forward to the next entry.

The plot is a mixture of getting-to-know-you basics and time travel hokum. If you've seen J.J. Abrams' first movie, *Mission Impossible III*, you've got a good idea of what to expect; because while the two movies don't share anything in terms of story, both have the professional, solidly constructed feel of a director whose less an auteur and more a craftsman. In both cases we've got familiar elements, but you're mostly so happy that those familiar elements are presented well that it's easy to ignore their predictability. For the duration of *Trek*, I was reasonably entertained, and when the end credits rolled, I didn't feel cheated by the experience. It was entirely *competent*; and in a world where Tony Scott and Michael Bay keep making movies, that can be very refreshing.

Spoilers ahead: So, Kirk is a young man full of piss and vinegar because his dad's dead and his stepdad likes antique cars (or something), and Spock is all conflicted because his mother is Winona Ryder. Really, who hasn't been there. The two both wind up at Starfleet, where it's an instant hate-hate relationship, but then a distress signal comes out from Vulcan, and it's off to the races. All the appropriate personnel wind up on the Enterprise (minus Scotty, who'll be along shortly), and on the trip to Vulcan, Kirk realizes that the signal is a trap; a realization that comes too late to save every other ship that answered the call. See, there's this nasty dude drilling a hole into Vulcan, and he's got a grudge against Spock—against *old* Spock, although he's not too fond of the younger version either. And despite everyone's best efforts to stop him, that nasty dude (Nero, a Romulan played by a painfully under-used Eric Bana) destroys Spock's homeworld, right before his eyes.

It's the only really shocking moment in the movie. (Well, theoretically shocking; I had it spoiled for me in an article on the Spock/Uhura romance.) Still, it's slightly undercut by the fact that we only see a handful of people die, including Spock's mom; despite all the talk about Vulcan culture, Spock's mourning is focused on Ryder, enough so that the end of the planet seems almost redundant. In a way, this is in keeping with the original series, as despite the apparent epic



focus, we're really just dealing with a handful of people. The best *Trek* movies knew to work around that; this one doesn't even bother.

In case you haven't realized, there's time travel afoot here, and it's frustrating just how thoroughly lazy that time travel is. The only reason it's here at all is so we can have a new version of old characters, and so we never have to worry about keeping continuity with the established *Trek*-verse. (Just think; it's a universe where *Voyager* may never happen!) The lack of imagination beyond that is disappointing. Nero is, in the history of memorable *Trek* villains, about on par with Sybok from *Star Trek V*, only less touchy-feely. He yells a couple times, he bitches about his dead wife, and then he loses. Once you get the explanation for why Nero is doing what he's doing, you keep waiting for the other shoe to drop, and it never does. Even the climax seems rote; the heroes come up with a plan, and then the plan basically goes as expected. Where's the excitement in that?

Really, the whole story is under-realized, with a reliance on coincidences (Kirk gets marooned on a planet right in the same spot as the old Spock, which just happens to be a few miles away from the Starfleet outpost where Scotty's stationed; it's a lucky thing this universe only has a handful of people, because there's apparently only a few square miles to keep them in) and clunky plotting (Romulus is going to be destroyed by a super-nova; Spock is the *only* person who steps up to save them; he has time to build a ship to do the job; and the Romulans don't have time to evacuate? Or maybe make some more calls for help?). Revisions could've helped—there's definite potential here, but it needed focus, a stronger, smarter villain, and a few more clever uses of time.

I'm not sure if it's a script problem or just Abrams' sensibility, but I was let down by a lack of effective emotional beats. I *liked* everybody (although Karl Urban needs to smile once in a while), but I didn't really care about them that much. Potential arcs are introduced for the two leads, and then fail to have satisfying conclusions. Kirk's need to prove himself should've meant more than it does—he's aimless and destructive at the beginning, and he's got the "save the day" gene built in, and it starts acting up as soon as trouble hits. Then any real character gets lost in the shuffle in the final act. Kirk does things, he's heroic and all, but I wanted a stronger shift from Kirk-the-brat to Kirk-the-captain. Spock gets more to chew on, including a nifty scene between his young and old self (points here for not killing off old Spock), but there still wasn't any real resolution. Worst of all, the Kirk-Spock friendship never really gets started; they don't hate each other at the end, but after all that build-up, shouldn't we get at least a glimmer of connection?

But I did like the movie well enough, right? I think I said that a few paragraphs ago. To the positive, it's a good cast. Chris Pine is charming, getting the right balance between humor and determination, and Zachary Quinto does right by my favorite character, so good on him. Out of the ensemble, I'd say Simon Pegg and Zoe Saldana actually manage to improve on the originals; Pegg is more charming than Doohan ever was, and Saldana is probably the closest the movie comes to having an emotional center. She and Quinto sell the Uhura/Spock romance (something I was dreading beforehand), and I'm interested to see how that develops; although no more make-out scenes on the transporter, please and thank you.

Really, what saves the new *Trek*, what prevents it from being bogged down by an often indifferent screenplay and a director whose obsession with lens flares borders on the pathological, is that it actually wants you to have fun watching it. It doesn't always work—the two big comedy set-pieces here are wincingly bad, although given that this is from the guys who gave us robot urination in *Transformers*, I guess it could've been worse—but there's an enthusiasm here that would do the original series proud. The first *Trek* movie fails because it forgot that enthusiasm, that sheer, unadulterated joy that comes from seeking out new worlds, and new civilizations. This latest version could do with a few more smart ideas, but at least when it hits warp speed, you get pulled along for the ride.

#### **Grades:**

**Star Trek: The Motion Picture: C**

**Star Trek: B**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- New Chekov was annoying. Yeah, we get it, he's got a craaaaazy accent. Move on.

- Why the hell was Winona Ryder in this movie? Is she supposed to be maternal now?
- At the start of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Spock is interrupted after completing the *Kolinahr* ritual; in *Star Trek*, he mentions the ritual to the Vulcan High Council. So it's all connected, really.
- Next week, we're moving to Thursdays, and continuing into the second season with "Catspaw" and "I, Mudd."

## DISCUSSION

- Community (271)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [El Santo](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 2:15am

Enterprise.

"(Just think; it's a universe where Voyager and Enterprise may never happen!)"

I'm a little confused on the timeline but was the TV show Star Trek: Enterprise affected by the time reboot? I'm guessing the events of that show happened before Nero crashed into George Kirk's ship. Which means ... Enterprise is the only show still in the new Star Trek canon!

[Reply](#)

- [KaratIoz](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:06am

Out of curiosity, why does everybody dump on Voyager? I enjoyed it. Actually I might just have enjoyed 7 of 9...

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:20am

Logically, you must be right.

Emotionally... urrrgh... :P

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)El Santo

5/22/09 5:12am

I have a buddy who loves everything Trek but hates Enterprise because it violates established continuity a bunch of times (he claims).

Does Enterprise work better as part of the Abrams-verse than it does the Classic Trek universe?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 7:24am

@KaratIoz - Voyager is much, much better than it's reputation, although it does fall into all the traps people suggest it has (reset switch, over-reliance on technobabble), but it's got some great things going for it as well (specifically Kate Mulgrew, who is just hands-down fantastic, and Jeri Ryan, and as a flaming old queen my appreciation of them has nothing to do with boobs).

It all depends what you look for in the show. It gets HEAVILY criticised by fans for not fulfilling it's original premise (war of attrition in the Detla Quadrant, two crews at each others throats), but it's not fair to criticise it for that - those concepts were jettisoned before the show ever went into production. If you just take it as a straightforward action show, which is what it is, then it's fine. No it doesn't have the darkness of DS9 (otherwise it would essentially end up as Battlestar Galactica-lite, one lone ship and a divided cast battling to survive as supplies run out), and yes it lacks some

of the thematic depth of TNG, but much of TNG and it's oh-so-very-late-80s moralising looks pretty clunky these days anyway. And of course the first three seasons of TNG, DS9 and Voyager all suck - that's just Star Trek. Take each for what it is (TNG, thoughtful, DS9 dark, Voyager action), and they stand just fine beside each other.

In short - leave Voyager alone!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)El Santo

5/22/09 8:15am

@El Santo—excellent, re: Enterprise. I guess it was just wishful thinking on my part.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:17am

I could have spent my whole life without realizing this. Thanks for nothing.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:32am

@Tokens Only: The Kathryn Hepburn accent (and bun of steel!) doesn't bother me, I'm Scottish and probably wouldn't have known an Indiana accent from a Rhode Island one. Does William Shater have an Iowa accent? Is there such a thing as an Iowa accent? These questions and much, much less occupy my mind on a regular basis. It's a fair point though, I'm sure I'd have found it distracting if Simon Pegg was playing Scotty with a broad West Country accent.

And I do think Kate Mulgrew is a good actor. The few non-Voyager things I've seen her in (including her one-person Hepburn show), she puts in great performances. And you're right about Genevieve Bujold, her screen tests are AWFUL.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:47am

Enterprise is still canon in both verses. That makes me chuckle.

Enterprise is also no more guilty of continuity tinkering than any other series. They all did it. As for the meetings with Romulans, Borg, Ferengi...they were all done so that they technically didn't violate canon. Lazy? Maybe. Still, I'll take Enterprise over Voyager and early DS9 any day.

The problem with Voyager is, yes, it doesn't explore it's potential enough, but also that almost all of it's characters completely and utterly suck. Get Chakotay, Paris, Kim and Torres in a scene together and the potential suckocity build-up is enough to rupture the fabric of the space-time continuum, or something.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:05am

Thank you, Random Internet Trek dork, I now consider myself much better informed of the accents of the Captains in Star Trek. Your geek knowledge has now been assimilated into to my own little collective.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:16am

Maybe I'll change my handle to I'll Defend Voyager. Or not....

@ Master Plaster Blaster Caster - actually I don't mind Torres. The character is pretty under-used, but given something decently dramatic to do (Dreadnought comes to mind), she can pull out the goods. Chakotay is good when he's being a thug, which is about two episodes in a seven year run, so yea, not going to go far with that one.

It's also worth pointing out that DS9 had Jake and Nog (tolerable at the time, rewatching they are absolutely excruciating), Rom (somehow even worse), Kira (zzzzzz) and even the much-vaunted Quark is pretty average (saved more by acting than writing). And of course TNG had Wesley who, even if every other character had been of Shakespeaian-level depth and complexity (and they weren't: stand up Dr Crusher and Troi, this could be your big moment), would balance everything out to the level of a daytime soap.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:17am

"No Enterprise-D in the timeline (and who knows if and how the Feds will meet the Borg?) means things happen differently."

That's not true, though. The Star Trek movie established that people from the original timeline (namely Nero and Spock) can travel to and muck about with the new timeline. So if original Spock can exist, Picard and company are still allowed to exist.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:28am

El Santo, Spock and Nero only made it to the new timeline by going through the black hole, which was closing rapidly. Entering the black hole only moments later sent Spock back in time by 25 fewer years, so the window of opportunity for getting in would have been very, very slim.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:57am

Prole Hole - did you see Kate Mulgrew in Remo Williams : The Adventure Begins" (I gotta add in the subtitle for ironic effect)? She was pretty good in that, even though she played a standard-issue "Good Bond Girl" character (with a mix of "smarter than her boorish male colleagues but stuck under the glass ceiling" thrown in too) And she was smokin' in the military uniform to boot.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:19am

@Prole-

I am from Iowa and have lived in Minnesota, Michigan and Manhattan. Everywhere I go, I am asked what my accent is, it sounds like something but no one can quite place it.

There's a lot of telemarketing done in this area, and heard it was (in part) because we have a friendly non-distinct accent.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:20am

P.S. What we do not have is any huge freaking gorges abutting cornfields. They just made that up.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:34am

@hercules rockefeller - No I haven't yet seen it, although I've heard good things about it. When I can find a copy, it's on my list! Thanks for the recommendation though!

@john barleycorn must diet - Yea, I'm from Glasgow where there's a lot of callcentre work now, because apparently British people automatically trust a Scottish accent (not sure how that worked out with the Royal Bank of Scotland, but I digress). I now live abroad (in the Netherlands), and mostly people say of my accent, "oh you're Irish!" Despite, you know, sounding Scottish. So it's a very subjective thing. It's nice to know that Shatner sounds vaguely authentic and Mulgrew doesn't though. If anyone is interested, Patrick Stewart's French accent is impeccable. Apparently.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:42am

Prole-

Did you ever catch the SNL "If it ain't Scottish it's Crap" bit with Mike Meyers? They did a great one where people kept coming in to get Irish stuff and he pulls out a giant map and says:

"There's Scotland! There's Ireland! There's the bloody sea! Now get out of here, you!"

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:59am

JBMD, no I've never seen it, although I've had many, many conversations abruptly end that way. A YouTube link is always gratefully received! :)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:11pm

Prole-

I think you're out of luck. It's not on the NBC SNL site and they pretty tightly keep stuff off YouTube. If I run into it sometime, I'll keep you in mind.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:16pm

Prole Hole, you'll need to take it with a grain of salt - it features things like the protagonist learning to dodge bullets from a Mr Miyagi type martial arts master and Wilford Brimley as the head of a super-secret government anti-corruption team that reports directly to the president. But all in all, it's a pretty darn fun movie. Evidently there's a whole series of Remo Williams books, so they were hoping for a whole franchise.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:51pm

Prole, of course every series has a few dud characters. If Chekov wasn't in agony so much, he would be intolerable. (As an aside, my favorite Chekov moment is when he's shot dead by Morgan Earp. Die, space Monkee.)

The problem with Voyager is that the best character is a hologram, with the second best being a pair of Borg boobs. And then...holy shit, that's about it. I saw an entire episode of Voyager that was about one of Janeway's earthbound ancestors. It's even more painful than it sounds.

You'll get no argument about DS9 from me. Without the decent turn that show took in Season 4, it was doomed. Not one, but two Wesleys? An ancient symbiote possessed of lifetimes of wisdom is that fucking dull? Also, we get Kira instead of Ensign Ro? Add the torture that is Sisko in love, and you've almost lost me.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:54pm

Actually, if anyone was the captain other than Janeway on the Voyager, they would've made it back to the Alpha Quadrant by the end of the premiere. The details are blurry, but if I remember correctly Janeway didn't head back home because of some compunctions she had with the Prime Directive, right? So wandering aimlessly through the Delta Quadrant was completely and utterly her fault.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)El Santo

5/22/09 1:17pm

@Eric, EXACTLY. I remember thinking about that during the start of Voyager. Janeway makes the decision to strand Voyager in the Delta quadrant and my first thought is, "Dude, this crew isn't all that bright. I guessed they staffed up Voyager with the third stringer academy graduates."

But, you know, I guess all starfleet vessels can't have a super-intelligent android or magic teenager onboard.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)El Santo

5/22/09 1:32pm

Eric, I guess that's what made Voyager interesting in the ST canon: it's finally a show about an absolutely average Starfleet ship.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)El Santo

5/22/09 1:33pm

I'm kidding of course, in case that didn't come through. I just love how all the other shows seem to have somebody on them who's a frickin genius, like every Starfleet ship gets issued one.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 1:58pm

Maritza-

Well, whatever it is, you can't get there from here.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)El Santo

5/22/09 2:00pm

How cunning are you Maritza?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 2:54pm

@Eric JA That's not a flaw in Voyager....

@Master Blaster "Also, we get Kira instead of Ensign Ro" Yea it would have been awesome to have had Michelle Forbes, but shes great in BSG so i forgive her!

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:03pm

It's quite obviously a rock quarry. Didn't know granite was a big export of Iowa. Learn something new every day at the movies...

[Reply](#)

- [Harbinger of the Arockalypse](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:10pm

Apparently Michelle Forbes, the actress who played Ensign Ro, wouldn't sign on for DS9 or Voyager, so they had to do those shoes with different characters instead. Which is a shame. Ro might be my favorite Star Trek character ever.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:35pm

@Doc Eon: It's clearly a dilithium quarry.

@Harbinger: Michelle Forbes, in internet terms, fucking owns. I've never seen her give a bad performance, from TNG to BSG to "In Treatment".

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)El Santo

5/22/09 5:35pm

Jake and Nog suck, but the worst DS9 character by far is the Holographic Lounge Singer. Fuck you, 90's cocktail nation-pandering douche!

[Reply](#)

- [Bertolt Blech](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:52pm

The canyon is a quarry. They got some helicopter footage in Barre, Vermont, also known as the Granite City, and CGI'ed it up. Needless to say, only people in Vermont really care about this.

[Reply](#)

- [Dutch Missourian](#)El Santo

5/23/09 8:31am

Back to the original subject: How did altering the timeline result in Chekov getting younger? This new version of Chekov is four years younger than the original would have been at the same date... did the destruction of the Kelvin depress Chekov's parents so much they decided not to fuck for four years or something?

[Reply](#)

- [Bender Bukowski](#)El Santo

5/23/09 6:41pm

If michelle forbes had been on DSN as originally planned, it would have best trek series on lock. Hypothetically, I think she would have bought out the best in the weaker characters.

And god knows she was easier on the eyes that the padded construction that was seven of nine...

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)El Santo

5/24/09 2:55am

@alurin re: Michelle Forbes - Or as Lady Heather, the (originally) well-written, highly-intelligent sympathetic dominatrix who SHOULD have been Grissom's love interest on CSI! Instead, we get Grissom and Jorja Fox's Sarah Seidel - whose never-previously-mentioned "long-term" romantic relationship was as authentic as an AstroTurf putting green....

Having said that, I thought Nana Visitor did a good job w/Kira Nerys - and I consider DS9 to be the best overall of the TREK series. While none of the others would exist w/out ToS and for its time it was genuinely innovative and bold, a lot of the more serious episodes date VERY badly - like "Spock's Brain" where Leonard Nimoy spends most of the episode with a shoebox with Christmas Tree lights on his head, or "Turnabout Intruder" with its jawdroppingly sexist attitudes!

[Reply](#)

- [Anywhere I lay my head](#)El Santo

5/24/09 8:46am

I've started watching Enterprise. I don't know where I am in the series but this one is about them landing on a preatomic world. What do you guys think about Enterprise?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/24/09 9:51am

drdarkeny: I have no opinion about the casting on CSI, since I can't sit through an episode. But I agree with you about Nana Visitor. she was great as Kira. Also did a good job on Battlestar.

[Reply](#)

- [Karatloz](#)El Santo

5/24/09 2:06pm

Hey thanks everybody! This is probably one of the best discussions I've read on this site.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Santo

5/24/09 2:39pm

@Anywhere;

I really like Enterprise and it gets better as you go along. I'm pretty lonely here in that opinion though.

Various:

Genieve Bujold was supposed to be Janeway? Shiver me timbers! I quite like Janeway as she is/was...

Patrick Stewart sounds nothing like a Feench person who learnt English at a very young age. He speaks like an English guy, with a great voice, who tries to roll his 'r's a bit when he uses a French word, and his French has people rolling on the floor over here, I promise.

Glaswegian and other European friends. Everything you've heard on here about US accents is true, but as fellow European, born in Glasgow, raised in the States and France, I can tell you that a lot of Europeans are confused because there are so many, many accents, languages and dialects here in a relatively small geographic area, whereas in the States, with a much bigger surface area, there are surprisingly few accents.

Obviously, you can go from coast to coast whilst speaking English, which if you traveled the same distance in Europe you'd go from Belfast to Moscow. In France or in England you can place a person to within few miles based on their accent. This is not true of the States, where there is a sort of general blanket 'midwest accent' (certainly with subtle variations which do not rise to the equivalent of the difference between a Geordie (sp?) accent and a Londonian one). Television has helped flatten this out a lot in the last century or so. I have a good friend from Cobb County Georgia (don't ask) who speaks with no twang at all (he didn't want to sound like a hick, but was able to avoid it by watching TV)...

Shatner could be from anywhere in the Midwest and even from Colorado where I grew up.

Janeway is a good call for Hepburn because they both speak with what is known as the 'midatlantic' accent, which comes from, as one might guess, the mid-Atlantic ocean—nowhere. Somewhere between London and New York. This was the accent Hollywood actors (particularly female ones) were required to learn under the old studio system. It comes from no particular place, but sounds clear, vaguely continental and classy. I recently read an article wondering if it has died out with its last famous practitioner: William F. Buckley, may he rest in pieces...

But seriously.. Genieve Bujold? Holy crap! That, I've got to see!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)El Santo



5/24/09 4:27pm

I think it's silly to debate what \*part\* of the Midwest a character is supposed to sound like they're from as opposed to the actor playing them, but are you perhaps confusing regional dialects with the "accent" one has when speaking a non-native language? Because aside from Americans all speaking English (theoretically), it is a vast country geographically and filled with glaringly distinct dialects, at least to a native. Ever been to New Yawk? Bahston? Maine (a-yuh)? Alabammy? Appalachia? Ever see Fargo (an exaggeration, to be sure, but still)? Listened to a Kennedy speech? Yes, the Midwest, West coast, and Southwest distinctions are very subtle (I certainly don't hear the difference) but we shore do got a whole lotta funny talkin' folk round these here parts, thatsferdamnsure. (An aside, I just loved it whenever the Pythons played Americans. An impressive blend of accuracy and absurd exaggeration.)

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)El Santo

5/25/09 9:54pm

@Richlieu Jr. et al - Ask and Ye Shall Receive! Genevieve Bujold as Captain Janeway in an extant scene of her from the original VOYAGER pilot:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

I myself wouldn't let her command my nieces' soccer team, let alone a Federation starship....

@alurin: No prob, there are lots of shows "everybody else" loves (like BREAKING BAD or LAW & ORDER: SVU) that I can't stand to watch, either.

That said - pity you can't see Michelle Forbes as Lady Heather, at least in her first two appearances. She was Six Kinds of Awesome....

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/26/09 12:53pm

Oh my god that scene is bad! Two problems which exacerbate one another : Bujold can't deliver a line, and the dialog is atrocious technobabble.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)El Santo

5/26/09 7:25pm

Even a good actor can't save stupid technobabble dialogue. One of TNG's worst sins (I only watched two episodes of Voyager, but I assume that kind of dialogue carried through that entire show too).

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/26/09 8:44pm

Actually, in Voyager, they completely eliminated non-technobabble dialogue.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Santo

5/27/09 10:09am

Thanks Drd!

She just completely lacks gravitas... Her line readings are credible, but she seems a bit like she took one too many valium.... I can't imagine it without the effects..

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)El Santo

5/27/09 12:16pm

It's so clear that Bujold is just not comfortable enough with English to haul out all those syllables and make it seem natural. Writers need to use a certain amount of so-called technojargon in order to establish an aura of credibility and authenticity, and any actor playing a character who has a job is going to have to be able to pull it off to some extent, whether it's on ST, BSG, ER or West Wing, etc. Of course, it gets overused and no more so than in sci-fi. You certainly don't want your entire plot to hinge on it.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)El Santo

5/27/09 6:08pm

Tinsel - the Deuce You Say, Man! Run a Level Three Diagnostic on your Sense of Wonder, and be certain to check for Graviton Particular buildup on your Suspension of Disbelief! Meanwhile, I'll zip up the Jeffries Tube to double-check that the Dramatic License cores are operative....

Back on the bridge in ten mics! Stat!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/27/09 8:05pm

DrD: be careful whose Jeffries tube you zip up!

On a previous topic, my girlfriend has been watching True Blood, and who should show up last night but Michelle Forbes! The woman is everywhere! glad to see she's getting work.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Santo

5/30/09 4:23pm

And she's nekked too!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [El Santo](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 2:06am

Movie format vs. TV show

To me, the new Star Trek movie high-lights the limitations of the movie format. Abrams and crew do create a likable set of characters, but you'll only get two hours at a time to know them. Wouldn't it be was more wonderful to spend 22 hours with them over the course of the season? Then we'd see the Spock-Kirk friendship develop more naturally, the secondary characters wouldn't tend to disappear, etc. etc. etc.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:22am

There's a scene towards the end where I think they're trying to establish the friendship by having Spock suddenly call Kirk "Jim". But for me it just felt clunky and unearned.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 7:36am

El Santo, it surprised me, but coming away from this film, I actually DID think I would like to see a series with this cast. I expected it to be a decent enough movie but was much more impressed by most of it than I ever expected to be. I still find the Spock/Uhura romance forced and quite un-necessary, and a bit out of nowhere (apart from anything Uhura can prove to be the emotional core without having to descend to romance - she did it in the original show, and can we PLEASE have some Nichelle Nichols love? She's just awesome), and as Zach said, a few re-writes might have tidied

things up (the old-Spock-meets-Kirk could have been easily cleared up with a couple of lines, it just didn't need to be that co-incidental), but it really is a decent movie, and easily the best Trek movie since First Contact.

I said it on another thread somewhere, but I'll repeat myself here - the whole time-travel aspect just seems like first-time-out nerves to me, as if they weren't QUITE sure that the new cast would work so gave themselves a reset switch which could be flicked if this bombed and they needed to return to established continuity. Now that's out of the way, and this has been a success, hopefully the next time out they can just concentrate on making a great film with a great cast and dispense with all the time-travel-reality-changing distractions.

I give your film a B+, Abrams!

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)El Santo

5/22/09 7:51am

"I was told that I need to 'reach out' to this guy."

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:05am

I was really worried that the "hip new young flashy" style would not do right by Spock who is so stoic and logical. All of the trailers and clips I had seen made him seem like a dick (though I would argue that marooning Kirk was a dick move, what they don't have a brig?). However, I think they were able to sell him as a hero and I am glad that his friendship with Kirk was emphasized - a friendship that transcends death and time. It might have seemed rushed since everything else was going on, but I do think they got some solid moments together - "If I do not make it back, please tell Lt. Uhura..." , the two of them working together on Nero's ship, and of course "It would be my honor, Commander." I liked it, and I think that now that they are friends, it is another reason to look forward to the sequel.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:38am

For a TOS fan who was very skeptical from the onset, I think the new film succeeded. Color me amazed. I only had a few gripes, but speaking of gripes...did you diss Scotty, Handlen? Fuckin' hell, man.

My gripes about the new film were fewer than I expected. Nero's motivation for hating Spock is questionable. Spock did attempt to help, no? How is destroying the Federation going to prevent that future supernova? Hint, Nero: It won't.

Nero's mining ship is cool, sure, but I'm pretty sure there's a more efficient way of mining than building the structural equivalent of a thousand skyscrapers just to save you the time of descending from the atmosphere. Also, that's some serious weaponry you miners have there.

And, Spock and Uhura? OK. Spock groping Uhura on the transporter pad before a mission in front of his crew members? Not likely.

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:39am

I think I read somewhere that this was filmed during the writers' strike, so they were stuck with the draft they had. I wonder how things might have been different had they been allowed to do rewrites.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:41am

Those are good points, Not To Be A Ginourmous Geek, I suppose what I should have said is, within the context of this film, it comes out of nowhere. Nothing is really said to establish it, they're just suddenly at it. And yes, I think it's

obvious in the way Nichelle Nichols played Uhura that her character had a terrific amount of respect for him (they also shared a love of music, if memory serves correctly). And her gentle, good-natured ribbing of Spock comes across as just that - two friends with mutual respect lightly teasing each other.

And yes, thank Gods she didn't end up with Kirk. Who isn't sexy. But is our sexy, sexy hero.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)El Santo

5/22/09 9:56am

"Also, that's some serious weaponry you miners have there."

These are the Romulans were talking about though. I have a feeling those pointy-eared bastards put photon torpedoes on everything.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)El Santo

5/22/09 10:03am

sigh...gonna be pretty nerdy ....but according to the interwebs, a comic prequel set in the 24th century says that Nero offered his services to help Spock save Romulus by mining for red matter. His ship was refitted with reverse engineered Borg technology and weapons (for some reason) by the federation. Spock was able to save every planet from the super nova (which threatened the entire galaxy for some reason)except Romulus. So in addition to his family and planet being destroyed, he felt personally betrayed by Spock.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:38am

This is completely unfounded speculation (the best sort of speculation!) but I thought the red matter was a sort of 23rd Century equivalent of red mercury, one of those mercenary myths that does the rounds as a super-powerful explosive that nobody can quite prove exists. Well, to be honest I saw it in an episode of Spooks once and this seemed like a vaguely convincing theory, so that's probably good enough, right?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

5/22/09 11:51am

I just assumed they had left over red colored matter from Alias in JJ's garage he wanted to get rid of.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:32pm

That's great, Dumbledore...couldn't some of that been in Spock's explanation? Nero sat on his arse for twentysome years just to catch Spock and get revenge for, what, bad timing...waiting too long? It's like blaming the Holocaust on the U.S. Why not spend some brainpower figuring out how to save your planet, Nero, which you could actually do again? Dr. Soren's motives made more sense.

And yeah, come to think of it, where in Starfleet regulations does it state the penalty for insubordination is ejection by escape pod to a dangerous ice planet somewhat close to a Federation outpost? Harsh.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:52pm

To get back to the original theme of this thread: Despite my many problems with this movie, I would be very happy to watch a series with this cast. Just don't let the Transformers guys in the writing room!

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)El Santo

5/22/09 12:56pm

I loved the new TREK movie unreservedly. I've been a TREK fan for decades now, and found it pretty easy to keep myself from dragging a bunch of gripes and demands into the new flick. I do agree that it was missing the philosophical exploration that characterizes the best TREK, and there may be a wee plot hole here or there, but it succeeds so spectacularly on so many fronts that I REALLY think you need to unclench the cheeks if you still found yourself feeling all nit-picky afterwards. And I have to disagree with a lot of what Handlen writes here: I thought the emotional beats and payoffs felt plenty earned, and the "wincingly bad" comedy setpieces had the audience going apeturds when I saw it (at least the "Kirk's hands" one did; the waterslide bit went on a bit past its welcome).

The New TREK is at least as successful as any summer blockbuster from the last 20 years I can think of. Right now there's a nation of 11-year-olds out there who will one day spend too much time on the future net talking about how much they loved STAR TREK when they saw it in '09. And they'll be right to do it.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)El Santo

5/22/09 1:06pm

Master Blaster, I think the take-away from Nero's behavior is that he is, how you say, not entirely sane. An evil madman, you know the type!

I don't think the new TREK succeeded spectacularly; I thought it was simply okay. Throwing romance in there was annoying, as was making Spock's behavior so damned irrational (like he, as captain of a ship, would really abandon that ship in the middle of a crisis just to save his parents. that's so out of character, even for the new franchise, that it's ridiculous). Plus I just didn't like the actor who played Spock at all. Decent enough popcorn flick, but that's about it.

Pine did a great job though, as did Cho and Bana.

[Reply](#)

- [i and l](#)El Santo

5/22/09 2:11pm

I agree with not-to-be. Spock and Uhura together is better than Kirk-Uhura. This way, we got to see Kirk a little jealous, and all three of them are on an exciting, uncertain trajectory (as opposed to Kirk just adding one more to the list, Uhura getting a little job security, and Spock returning his gaze to that view-finder thing sticking up out of the console).

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)El Santo

5/22/09 2:24pm

Kirk would do that, Phone, not Spock. Spock was the guy who wouldn't relinquish command to give his pops a blood transfusion. He certainly wouldn't jump ship to coordinate a fairly simple beam out.

Nit picking aside, I did like the film. It was far, far better than I expected.

[Reply](#)

- [Harbinger of the Arockalypse](#)El Santo

5/22/09 3:01pm

Yeah, I loved the film and want to see it again. It turned me into the 9-year-old who was first amazed by Next Generation. I hear all the criticisms and recognize them, but I just don't care. I liked it too much. I was too happy coming out of the theater.

And I would love to see new adventures every week.

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)El Santo

5/22/09 4:19pm

I loved it and I felt cheated that they didn't reboot this as a two hour premiere, and then do a series. This should be a series.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)El Santo

5/22/09 5:09pm

Yes, Star Trek was born as a series and that is the form that best suits it. This is a group of people we should see develop over time, one hour a week. Why was it not developed as a TV series? Are the profits for a movie franchise that much greater?

Curious.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)El Santo

5/22/09 5:59pm

I think that the profits for a well-promoted blockbuster are more predictable than that of a series. With the current "tentpole" system you're guaranteed one or two weeks of box office dominance, and then you've got the blu-ray/dvd released just in time for xmas. Now that blockbusters are all pg-13, you've also got merchandising (they've got terminator toys right between the Star Trek and Wolverine stuff at target, right where it gets my 4 yr-old's attention). On the other hand, TV shows often don't make it past the 2nd season, don't have strong merchandising options, and have to rely on product placement for revenue in the DVR era.

[Reply](#)

- [Dutch Missourian](#)El Santo

5/23/09 8:18am

I just think it's funny that when I went to see the movie (after the weekend was over), the only other people in the theater other than my friends and me were all middle-aged...

I miss Picard and Data.

[Reply](#)

- [Bender Bukowski](#)El Santo

5/23/09 6:33pm

Spock gets the girl, Kirk gets the command position. It provided a sense of balance.

Now that all bets are off, presumably ANY series character can show up...im just pissed that ill hear about it one way or another beforehand, it kills all the fun. Like Robert Downey's surprise appearance @ the end of the hulk movie might have been the cinematic highlight of 2008 , you know?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Santo

5/24/09 2:49pm

It is true that a series gives much more time for character exploration and development, as well as for the actors themselves to learn who they are. However, as Zach has so rightly pointed out, even though TOS is created as a 'stand-alone' meaning each episode resets with them back together and trekking onwards, it is amazing how quickly the characters gelled and how you can pretty much drop in at any point and understand the unspoken love between Kirk, McCoy and the Other Guy...

Hopefully, with all this origin stuff out o the way, they'll be able to recreate that and go on to explore some deeper subjects. That said, I had a great time, even the second time.

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)El Santo

5/29/09 6:21pm

Is it just me or is Barkley in TNG kind of like a drug addict? Always creeped me out... I don't even want to imagine what kind of fluids he left behind after using the holodeck.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 9:25am

Movies for Movies Sake

Good Job Zack, at a reasoned and thoughtful thesis on why these movies may not be all that good. I don't agree with the conclusion (because Star Trek is burned into my subconscious as awesome), but I can't fault any particular points you make about either film.

One thing that did occur to me, though, and is worth noting if we're going to tackle the movies, is that the good ones really FELT like movies. Sure, TMP had an overture, but so did Ben Hur. You can't get a 10 minute tracking shot of the Enterprise on TV, nor can you get the scale of the universe in the way a movie can.

On this point, TMP and Star Trek both succeeded wildly- definitely movie in scale. II, III and IV also succeeded here. From Generations on, however, I distinctly remember feeling like they just recorded a long episode in widescreen with new velour uniforms. I always felt cheated out of my \$7.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 9:33am

"From Generations on, however, I distinctly remember feeling like they just recorded a long episode in widescreen with new velour uniforms."

This. Especially with Insurrection, which would have felt stretched even as a 2-part episode. Though, I still think First Contact worked well enough in the format. Enterprise vs. Borg, Borg get blown up, yay. Popcorny fun.

I always felt like they should have done Dominion...\*something\*. Movie about the war, movie about the peace (Nemesis' mention of the war doesn't count), anything.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:03am

Yeah, I think that's one of the reasons I was never really able to embrace First Contact—part of the problem is that the Next Gen crew (Stewart and Spiner aside) just don't have enough presence for the big screen, but it just didn't have a strong enough scope.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:36am

Here's a "minor" surface detail:

No Vulcan.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:42am

Not minor...but not necessarily major, either. Vulcans lost their status as the Federation's movers and shakers once Earth became more prominent.

[Reply](#)

- [toastedkatz](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:48am

holy shit, really? How have I seen Back to the Future 500 million times and not caught that?

[Reply](#)

- [toastedkatz](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:52am

you can't make a show like this without being able to threaten us with the deaths of the sub-major characters. It doesn't really matter if its a big shift in timeline or a small one, the shift itself means they get to waggle Chekov's death in front of us in the next movie.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 10:53am

Toasted-

Honestly, I don't know how you missed it. When you go see BTTF next, you'll realize the only way they could have noted that more broadly would have been to get a lit up sign and an arrow pointing at the mall entrance with the words "SEE WHAT WE'VE DONE HERE?"

[Reply](#)

- [toastedkatz](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 11:00am

I probably just filed it behind all the other awesome things that happen elsewhere in the movie.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 11:36am

I suppose you are right that "New Vulcan" will seamlessly replace "Old Vulcan" in future movies. Seems a bit awkward, though.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 11:45am

Also, Picard's time is ... what ... only 80 years into the future? Given the smallness of the population and what I imagine is the stifling conservatism of Vulcan procreation, I don't think they'd reach the 6 billion from before Nero blasts the planet to pieces. Unless the Vulcans pick some Romulan converts to join them, I guess.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 12:24pm

So, if Spock acts according to logic, than wouldn't logic dictate that he gets it on with as many Vulcan hotties (ladies on the bridge and freaks in the sheets!) as possible? You know, to repopulate the Vulcan race? It might put a damper on his relationship with Uhura. Unless of course, she wanted to join in....

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 12:57pm

MLC: The problem is that there are big differences between the "original" timeline and the new timeline, such as knowledge of the Romulans, when the Enterprise was constructed, etc... which cannot be reconciled unless you assume that the arrival of the Narada set off a huge cascade of unpredictable changes, and that's before we factor in the destruction of Vulcan. So the Lone Pine Theory cannot be true.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)john barleycorn must diet



5/22/09 1:40pm

The whole "once every seven years" thing is really going to put a damper on the whole "repopulate the Vulcan race" thing.

Somebody want to do the math on that? How long will it take for 10,000 people to turn into 6 billion?

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 2:07pm

Maybe the Federation could invent a Parthenogenesis Device.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 2:13pm

I think the vulcan's will probably take a "quality over quantity" approach. The first thing they'll rebuild will probably be those dreadful exam pods for their elementary school. and i thought the Iowa Text of Basic Skills was stressful!

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 3:14pm

Dumbledore, that's what Old Spock is off to do...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/22/09 3:28pm

25 points to I Hate To Be That Guy!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/23/09 4:18pm

My first thought when we saw the Romulans was, "But that totally fucks up the surprise on everyone's face in 'Balance of Terror' when they see the pointy ears and look at Spock!"

Other disappointment: In that same episode when they talk about the Romulan war they say they couldn't see from ship to ship back then... Back when? (this one may be explainable)

[Reply](#)

- [Bender Bukowski](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/23/09 6:59pm

Waitaminiute...does any thing in the canon explicitly contradict Spock + Uhura = Tuvok?

Really, I dunno. I didn't watch much of voyager on account it sucked.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/23/09 7:27pm

If you're going to use BTTF as the means to defend time travel, then you've lost your argument right there.

I guess Vulcan I will go the same way as the ridgeless Klingons: We don't talk about that.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/24/09 3:55am

@ Richelieu: a quick googling reveals that the Earth-Romulan War took place during the years 2156-2160. The attack on the Kelvin in the new movie happens in 2233. Viewscreen tech might have advanced a bit in the meantime.

OTOH, the Enterprise series apparently starts in 2151. Now, I've never actually watched that show, so I don't know the details, and I certainly have no idea whether the war is included in the storyline somehow, but it seems from what I'm told that they have way more advanced tech than Spock is talking about in Balance of Terror.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/24/09 3:19pm

Doc, I take my hat off to you and your quick Googling. That is honestly interesting.

I wonder if Abrams et al did that quick googling themselves, or threw it to the wind?

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 6:53pm

Little Donny would be very distressed to find that Tuvok not only won't find his way home now but will never actually exist. Poor Little Donny.

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 6:54pm

Little Donny:

<http://www.comedycentral.co...>

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 9:20am

That transporter accident

...still freaks the hell out of me.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 9:44am

Ditto. I think I actually got a nightmare or two from it when I was a kid.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 10:31am

yeah, the "what we got back...didn't live long" line was pretty cold. I can only imagine what must have happened to make that guy not even refer to it by name or even a simple "they"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 10:37am

"didn't live very long...fortunately."

Its the "fortunately" that rips that shit up.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 11:58am

<http://stars.ign.com/articl...>In memory of Commander Solak and that other guy:

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 11:58am

Sonak. Whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 12:25pm

No, doubt, the "fortunately" creeped me out for years.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 12:42pm

and the distorted screams -

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 6:50pm

I only have the director's cut of TMP, but I remember a line that isn't in the version I have. After the accident, I remember Shatner delivering the all-time worst reading of a line: "Oh my god..." that was so flat it was embarrassing. Was this in the original version, or am I thinking of another scene/movie?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 9:00pm

Meyer-

There was a different, longer, version that played on network TV that they extended (believe it or not) for TV (probably to 3 hrs). I still remember little scenes from that which are neither in the theatrical or the directors cut (which I have). Most notably, there's a scene where the Davey Jones looking kid is introduced to Kirk by Scotty as his nephew and some additional dialogue which helped to explain why Scotty cared so much when he bought it.

Maybe what you are thinking about was part of that?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 9:58pm

@Mr. Barleycorn -

That "Escape from Witch Mountain" kid scene is an extra on the director's cut DVD. The awful "Oh my god scene isn't, though. Maybe you're right about remembering the TV version.

My dad actually did his own VHS edit of TMP for fun years and years ago to tighten it up - I think he cut about 20 minutes from the movie - and it did work better, although the DVD director's cut is the way to go. (He also edited almost all of the Ewoks out of "Return of the Jedi"!)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 10:16pm

Penguin:

Sybok was Spock's half brother in V. Sonak bought it in I. I only wish it was Sybok.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

5/22/09 10:20pm

You're right, Penguin. My mistake!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D.N. Nation

5/23/09 4:21pm

I did an edit of ST:TMP that lasted a svent 1:23 in film school. Some brusque edits, but much better pacing.

The funny thing was, no matter how much I cut out of that Enterprise fly-by, it still seemed slow... I can't remember if they cut that down or not in the director's cut.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

5/23/09 5:52pm

They cut down some of the V'ger Cloud stuff (but added some bits too), but left the fly-by scene intact in part because Goldsmith's music for the scene was so good.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D.N. Nation

5/24/09 3:15pm

So say we all!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.N. Nation

5/24/09 4:41pm

Goldsmith, the greatest composer in Hollywood history, never got his full due. Hermann's definitely up there, but not nearly as prolific. (Don't talk to me about Mr. "I'll just rearrange the 3 notes of the Star Wars theme and get the Superman theme".)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

5/25/09 8:09pm

That's a very interesting idea - that the transporter actually kills you! No wonder McCoy hated using it. Although in "Khan", Saavik & Kirk are having a conversation while being disassembled/reassembled (which always struck me as odd), so maybe it isn't quite that cut-and-dried. I'm assuming that the device actually moves the disassembled atoms to the new location via the beam, so it's still \*your\* atoms being put back together. Philosophers would have a field day debating what happens to the soul and whether just using the damned thing was an immoral act. It's pointless to over-examine a fictional sci-fi technology, I know, but it's still fun!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D.N. Nation

5/27/09 10:13am

I'm not to knocked out by the idea that if you are falling when beamed up that you would still be falling on arrival. Does the transporter store kinetic or inertial energy? If so, why? Clearly it would be safer not to...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.N. Nation

5/27/09 12:29pm

HAH! Another gut laugh from RJ, well done. You're on a roll! Plus landing on those rounded-up transporter pads bumps sure must've smarted. Maybe if someone is being shot at mid-transport, the bullet comes out and finish the job on the pad too!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

5/27/09 1:45pm

Clearly, we would have been saved a lot of narrative trouble if Desilu had just ponied up for a shuttle set. The transporter SEEMS to solve the problem of getting the crew to the surface with a minimum of narrative effort, but then you have to continually create contrivances to explain why you can't just beam the characters out of any trouble they get into. That's without even getting into the philosophical quandaries that Lil' Dennett brings up (which I've seen essays on before). Then you get the late period TNG episodes where they're so desperate for stories that they start deconstructing ideas like warp travel and the transporter, which should properly be taken for granted. A lesson to studios: you have to spend money to save on bad narrative ideas!

Incidentally, I would like a "Lil Danny Dennett" action figure. Is he simply a scaled-down version of Dennett, complete with long white beard of wisdom? Or is he a child version?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.N. Nation

5/27/09 6:27pm

Here's another one - the holodeck! Granted it's a better device than having to land on Planet Nazi, Gangster or Teepee. My personal head-scratcher: If two people in a holodeck walk in opposite directions, why doesn't one of them eventually run into a wall?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

5/27/09 8:14pm

Yes, the holodeck is an even worse example. The holodeck doesn't actually do anything BUT serve as a crutch when you're too lazy to come up with a real story.

"If two people in a holodeck walk in opposite directions, why doesn't one of them eventually run into a wall? "

Um...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 6:26pm

Not the target audience

Well, it's obvious that the new ST was made for people who hate ST (note how proud the director is of having absolutely no previous Trek exposure). Are there really \*no\* more stories to be told in the old Trekverse that we needed an alternate reality via the tedious use of time travel? What a wonderful opportunity squandered to give us an actual origin story instead of: "We're not clever enough to come up with ideas that can be folded into the existing canon, so let's erase everything. Time travel, that'll do it!" (Besides, I think someone already made "Terminator." More than once.)

Best moment of the film was the opener of Kirk Sr.'s sacrifice to save his unborn son. Then the movie starts... So, we get an apple-chomping Kirk oozing smugness during his KMaru victory. (Sorry, for all his faults, TOS's Kirk was \*never\* smug.) We get a world where Vulcan no long exists (and Zack, I didn't know about it beforehand, and the scene carries absolutely zero emotional weight). Shrug. Then we get almost constant, shaky hand-held camera shots along with fight scenes shot ENTIRELY IN CLOSE-UP in nauseating jitter-cam for no reason except it's easier for the actors, lessens production costs, and makes the editor's job easier. And when the camera isn't vibrating, it's swooping and panning ceaselessly for no reason except that it's supposed to inject "energy" into a scene (it doesn't). And lens flares! The only thing that takes an audience out of a movie more quickly than hand-held.

Pegg and Urban seemed to be the only ones who know what a Trek movie is supposed to be about (fun!). The early scenes of Kirk's hounddog nature were a fun addition and entirely in character - oh, but that's Alternate Kirk, not TOS Kirk, so never mind. Cho looks completely wrong for Sulu and as pretty as the new Uhura is, she can't hold a candle to the sultry power of NNicholls. Didn't give a shit about Bana, I was getting way too many Nemesis flashbacks looking at him. And apparently Chekov had never spoken to a computer before in his life. I don't mind Spock having a girlfriend, but there's no way he'd go for inappropriate PDAs while on duty. And Pike in a wheelchair. I get it.

Not your father's Trek indeed.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/22/09 6:48pm

The jittery fight scenes bugged me too. If you're going to remake Trek into an action franchise, then the action scenes should be exciting, not incomprehensible!

I thought the movie was okay, though. My biggest gripe is that it essentially reduces the two main characters into these angsty types whose motivations can be traced back to the trauma of their parent's early death. I'm so sick of that. It's so overdone. Prior to this new movie, Kirk & Spock were just highly qualified military types, no daddy issues, no dark tragedies driving them, just interesting people doing interesting shit out in the middle of space. Now they're all dark and edgy. And that can have some cool implications, sure, but it seems like kind of a narrative cop-out, too. I think a character is more interesting if his/her motivations can't simply be defined as "oh, he's angry because his father died tragically when he was a baby" or whatever. But I guess that fits the template for action movie heroes in our day and age.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/22/09 7:18pm

When the history of cinema is written 100 years from now, they will point to the early 1990s and the MTV-ization of film with non-stop editing and jitter-cam as its nadir. Sadly, 20 years later and we're still there. Form needs to follow function. If your movie is about the excess and assault of modern media (e.g., Natural Born Killers), then assaulting your audience with 2 hours of continuous 3-second (or less) shots is entirely appropriate (man! I had to pee so bad during that, but I knew there'd be no lull in the movie to sneak away). But something like Harry Potter III, whose very first image is in hand-held with visible, over-grainy texture, uh-uh, sorry, doesn't work.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/22/09 8:05pm

Gleeth, I basically agree with you, but in TOS, Spock did have daddy issues. Something they carried over into TNG, as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/22/09 8:22pm

That's a good point, but in TOS it was more of the resentment-of-asshole-father type of thing, not the my-m0ther-literally-slipped-through-my-fingertips-and-fell-to-her-death type of thing, ya know?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/23/09 9:37am

Tinsel, I'm not a big fan of the new movie, or of the time travel device, but I do think that Abrams and Co. made a sound decision in deciding to jettison the constraints of 700+ hours of "continuity". Whatever its other flaws, the movie does feel like a breath of creative fresh air, relative to every other ST flick since TWOK.

And I disagree about the casting as well. The writing for Kirk is a little one-note, so it's hard for me to evaluate Pine's Kirk, but Zachary Quinto's Spock is perfect. And I love John Cho's Sulu. No, he doesn't physically resemble George Takei, but I don't think that's the point. I think he does a great job with the few character moments he's given. And I think Saldana's a fair match for Nichols. Again, the writers don't give her a lot to do... but that's not so different from Nichols' fate either!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Find Tinsel Distracting

5/23/09 3:59pm

I also agree that it is liberating to rid the new series of the weight of the 'canon', much as I love what that canon represents (and I know you're one of the few with me in even defending 'Enterprise', Tinsel!)

I myself was quite offended by the whole 'Not your father's..' crap and also by Abrams bragging about not getting Trek, but having seen the film I think you have to chalk that up to savvy marketing. Why would someone who sat through Nemesis want to go through that again, for goodness sake? More asses in seats means more Trek with bigger budgets...

I think the 'bad parent' psychology can be over done, certainly, and I don't find it is overly profound here, but I saw it as different from just being 'dark and edgy' and more a trying to show that these two men, raised on different planets and with such different cultures and personalities, were in fact quite similar: lost parents, dig the same girl, etc and in not being so different, knock heads and perhaps can find their way into a bromance (last time I use that term, ever.. I don't know what got into me)

Here's hoping the next one has more to offer thematically, fewer lens flares, and better plot...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/23/09 4:55pm

Good comments all, my fellow middle-aged droogies. Guess I will have to accept being a hard-to-please crank. I've never been much of a fan of too-convenient time travel and parallel realities, but maybe the sloppy filmmaking exacerbated my irritation. Although... lifting a plot device straight out of Terminator (and others) weeks before the opening of T4 seemed pretty unimaginative. And borrowing the absurd trope of "Platforms at unimaginable heights with NO RAILINGS" from Star Wars hardly helped (yes, I know, no one asked me to write it). Considering that TOS has never had an origin story, my biggest disappointment is that we still don't have one. It just seems that from the last episode of Enterprise to The Cage there are still potentially endless stories a creative writer (again, not me) could come up with without throwing in a big fuck-you to the very people who kept the franchise alive all this time.

Re. Sulu: Not specifically bothered that Cho and Takei look nothing alike. Just something about the odd side-hood to his eyes I found distracting. And maybe new Uhuru will grow on me. I will leave the debate of the relative fuckability of the two to more qualified minds.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Find Tinsel Distracting

5/24/09 3:25pm

Your point about us still not having an origin story for TOS is quite interesting and apropos (and I will therefore forgive you calling me middle-aged! I'm just a late, very late bloomer!)

With all the bells and whistles and movement (much of which I liked), they did kind of do a bait-and-switch on us, didn't they?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#) I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/24/09 4:50pm

Hee, sorry about that M le Cardinale. I sensed we were on a similar chronology. No need to rush it!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/25/09 12:47pm

I'll accept the middle-aged designation in the spirit it was intended.

And you make a very good point about the "origin story". Of course, this is part of the weakness of the "alternate timeline" move. If we knew the "real" original story, than the changes they ring on it here might be interesting. But since we don't know the real one, it's all empty.

On the other hand, since the new movie is an alternate timeline, that does leave the field open for someone to fill in the "true" origin story later, perhaps after the current movie series has sputtered out a decade or so hence.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/25/09 4:04pm

I'm afraid it may already be too late for me to swallow a re-re-retro-boot.

Considering how such a momentous event as the destruction of Vulcan could carry absolutely no emotional impact, it occurred to me that in the movie's frantic pacing, we're still digesting the concept of alternate timelines and all that implies, without yet feeling firmly vested in the new "rules" this established. Then the scene happens so coldly and abruptly, and the issue abandoned just as quickly, that the full import of the event is never given the proper gravity and respect. It ends up being nothing more than cheap manipulation, and unsuccessful at that. (Someone *\*did\** tell Abrams that the Vulcans were, you know, sorta popular?)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

5/25/09 6:35pm

I find myself compelled to confess that you are right-on in your assesment of my age, Tinsel... FWIW...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Kinja!](#)Zack Handlen

9/07/17 1:09am

*This comment or account was deleted on Disqus before The A.V. Club's comments were migrated to Kinja.*

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Kinja!

5/22/09 5:10am

He was also chased by a Cloverfield on Hoth. That was new.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Kinja!

5/22/09 9:30am

And the part where the one monster was eaten by the bigger monster just before it ate Kirk was a rip-off of one of the worst parts in The Phantom Menace.

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Kinja!

5/22/09 9:43am

I assumed those weren't purposeful references as much as they were involuntary references. Abrams might not have realized he was doing it; I think he's just got Star Wars running in a perpetual loop in his brain.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Kinja!



5/22/09 10:04am

Plus both movies have space ships.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Kinja!

5/22/09 10:35am

One lesson that Abrams clearly learned from TPM was - exploring the backstory of an iconic character is fine for a scene or two. But whatever you do - DON'T MAKE YOUR ENTIRE GODDAMN MOVIE ABOUT HIM WHEN HE'S A 9-YR OLD BOY!

[Reply](#)

- [Morgendorffer](#)Kinja!

5/22/09 7:57pm

First thing I thought when Kirk got dumped on the snowy planet: Oh my God, it's Hoth! Find a tauntaun, quick!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Kinja!

5/23/09 2:50pm

Honestly, it reminded me more of Rura Penthe.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Kinja!

5/23/09 6:24pm

Yeah, I definitely got Phantom Menace douche chills with the "there's always a bigger fish" oh, so convenient deus ex machina. On Hoth.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)Kinja!

5/24/09 12:39am

My biggest problem with the Ice Planet Hoth Playset scene comes when the deus ex machina cloverfield has the tauntaunalo in its mouth, well over a ton of fresh meat, then spits it out to chase after the 180 pound bag of bones. The second time I saw it, I knew that was a good time to hit the head.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kinja!

5/24/09 2:18pm

Blgger similaries: Kirk is a farm boy, frustrated and longing to get out of town... Meets a guy in a space bar, he's told that he has to live up to his dead father's reputation...

Yes, this is classic achetypal Joe Campbell storytelling, but it cuts a bot close here, IMHO...

When you consider how Abrams has been going on about how he didn't 'get' Trek, but loved Star Wars, you can kind of see what's going on. I agree with the poster who says it's probably not intentional: Star Wars is just the ruler he measure SciFi by, for better or worse...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Kinja!

5/25/09 10:17am

Also the Lucas-esque awards ceremony at the end.

As far as I can tell, Abrams' approach was to take one part Star Wars, one part Wrath of Khan, and chop finely.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kinja!

5/27/09 10:10am

Sprinkle liberally with lens flares...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Kinja!

5/28/09 4:08pm

Enderjed-

When I was a kid, I had the Ice Planet Hoth Playset, with collapsable Ice Bridge. My mom sold it at a garage sale for a dollar.

Bitch.

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)Kinja!

5/29/09 6:42pm

Don't forget that Spock plays the Obi-Wan in that scene and scares away the monster, just like in Star Wars. Except instead of a krayt dragon call it's fire...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kinja!

5/30/09 4:22pm

Good call, scott!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 12:03pm

One thing forgotten

I think that Zack misses one point here in conjunction with TMP. Robert Wise ranks right up there with Uwe Boll as the worst movie director of all time. He was complicit in the destruction of The Magnificent Andersons, and although The Sound of Music and West Side Story are beloved by millions of elderly women, they are not good movies. They are musicals for crying out loud. Movie musicals are the 2nd lowest form of communication, right after talk radio. People love the songs. Wise's name is synonymous with vapid, overdone movies.

The new Star Trek was excellent.

So long, farewell, au wiedersehen, goodnight.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/22/09 1:11pm

"He was complicit in the destruction of The Magnificent Andersons"

Didn't this assertion spark a flamewar around here a few weeks ago? Shields up!

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/22/09 2:12pm

Troll, troll, trollity troll. Working as the editor on Citizen Kane should be enough to get him a lifetime pass. He also directed The Haunting, one of the greatest horror movies of all time (and I think the movie that uses black and white to the greatest effect, IMHO) as well as The Day the Earth Stood Still, one of the best sci-fi movies ever made. And West Side Story and Sound of Music are immensely entertaining, stone cold classic movies. Yes, he was the wrong choice for

Star Trek but that does not change the fact that he was a great director.  
Moron.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/22/09 2:20pm

We're talking about the Ambersons, aren't we?

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/22/09 3:36pm

KLATU VERATA NIKTU

That's all I have to say about Robert Wise.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/22/09 7:16pm

Henry - I'm afraid you're doomed to spend your life stuck in the middle ages with no car, no gas, no S-Mart.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/23/09 4:04pm

Piss off troll. the director's guild of America elected him their leader for more than a decade. Maybe they know a tad more about directing than you?

And musicals can't eb good films? I take back what I said, you've proved the profound genius of your opinion right there...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/23/09 7:42pm

Don't feed the troll, it's just what they want.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/24/09 3:20pm

You're right, Tinsel.

I'm new to this stuff, and sometimes it really shows!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/24/09 4:47pm

Same here, and I've put my foot in it more times than I'd like. I recognized this "Wise is the one who ruined Ambersons" guy from previous baitings.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

5/25/09 12:19pm

Nothing worse than a dumbass Mister Know-It-All Movie Geek, Tinsel and Richlieu.

He's the kind of guy who acclaims Quentin Tarrantino as a "genius" for the same kinds of Meandering "Hommages" (French spelling totally intentional, of COURSE!) to Roger Corman and Crown-International Pictures that all us Seventies Film-School types dreamt up while in the middle of weekend-long weed-and-speed binges. Thankfully, three

decades of watching Republicans flush the country down the toilet with their paper-money "social conservatism", and a few Twelve-Step Programs, cured us of THAT much, at least!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Al running with the bulls Gore

5/25/09 12:42pm

Your syntax defeats me, dr darkeny. Did Reagan and the Bushes\* cure you of weed-and-speed binges, Corman and C-I pictures, or Tarantino\*\*-esque "hommages" to same?

\*Sounds like a wedding band!

\*\* one "r", please.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#) Al running with the bulls Gore

5/27/09 6:24pm

alurin - sorry, too much coffee that morning. Could also use an "edit" feature on this blog, so I could go back after posting something and make it marginally coherent:

- Three decades of Right-Wing social conservatism meant that it was no longer safe to be going on weed&speed binges like we did during the Seventies.

- The only GOOD thing about that was that we didn't end up making artsy "hommages" to Roger Corman or Crown-International movies, which is what we talked about constantly.

- Quentin Tarantino is hailed as a "genius" for coming up with movies that are nothing BUT artsy "hommages" to Corman and C-I.

I hope that's clearer.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Al running with the bulls Gore

5/28/09 10:08am

Thank you, much clearer!

Though I would argue that "Pulp Fiction", at least, transcends mere homage.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Doc Eon](#) Zack Handlen

5/22/09 3:25am

One thing in ST:TMP's favor...

...is that it's the only movie where the original cast don't look too geriatric to actually be allowed onto a spaceship.

Amazing that Wrath of Khan was made only 3 years later - they all look to have aged at least a decade in the interim.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#) Doc Eon

5/22/09 5:13am

Those are some sexy uniforms in S:TMP

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Doc Eon

5/22/09 9:18am

If we are going to slag on TMP's uniforms again, please note (in the picture above, right side) that the uniforms seem to have been modeled after Roddenberry's personal wardrobe.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 9:33am

Only McCoy get to rock the open disco collar.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 9:50am

I've seen that film two dozen times and never noticed that, Hanley.

I do love that transporter accident scene. Manning the controls: former Yeoman Rand. She just couldn't do anything fucking right, could she?

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 9:51am

I remember reading/hearing that one of the things Harve Bennett wanted to fix when he came on board as producer after the The Motion Picture came out was how they looked (or Kirk, anyway). He disliked that they'd made up Shatner to look at least 10 years younger than his real age, which was nearly 50. He wanted the cast to look their age . . . which worked great for the theme of Wrath of Khan.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 10:06am

In the new movie I thought "Pike's Admiral uniform looks like Kirk's TMP uniform" and imdb confirmed it. I'm even smarter than I thought I was!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 10:49am

Nick Meyer's audio commentary to Star Trek II focused heavily on his insistence that the movie tackle age and grief and change. You get the feeling his preference would have been to have made the crew look older than they were, if anything.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 1:12pm

It is pretty remarkable that they're already talking about retirement in TMP, considering how many movies they had left to go.

When was Scotty's tremendous weight gain — between 2 and three? I think he looks OK in 2, if a bit more stout than usual. It's in 3 that he's suddenly perfectly round.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 1:36pm

I always thought that was part of the point of TMP: it was only a few years after the original 5 year mission, even if much more than that had passed in realtime.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 2:00pm

Chartex-

I wondered if Doohan had a space girdle (spirdle?) under his TMP uniform.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Doc Eon

5/22/09 3:44pm

He's pretty clearly wearing a girdle in a lot of episodes of the old show, so I'm going to guess yes for the movie as well.

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Doc Eon

5/23/09 2:32pm

Scotty was enormous in Generations.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Doc Eon

5/24/09 2:15pm

Wasn't daibetes the unseen roundifier?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Doc Eon

5/30/09 4:22pm

So... He gained the weight on purpose for the role?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 5:59am

Doesn't anybody proofread anymore.

"as soon as trouble hits. Than any real character gets lost in the shuffle in the final act. Kirk does things, he's" Did you mean "then"?

"I guess it could've been worse—but it general, there's an enthusiasm here that would do the original series proud." Did you mean "in"?

And as previously stated the new film erases everything post-Kirk's birth as the Kelvin's destruction kills George and Winona Kirk. No TNG (other than ST:FC) no DS9, no Voyager. Enterprise (except the finale) stay and all the films are wiped away. But then when you deal with a franchise which has an encyclopedia dedicated to it you need a way to break the bonds. Also I don't see anyone mention that Abrams and Nimoy have both been part of the M:I and Star Trek franchises, and have both directed Trek films.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 8:18am

Pretty sure Winona Kirk is just fine at the end. (I had no idea that was Jennifer Morrison till I checked the IMDB. Weird.)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 11:06am

"But then when you deal with a franchise which has an encyclopedia dedicated to it you need a way to break the bonds."

You could just ignore the encyclopedia.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 11:47am

"You could just ignore the encyclopedia."

Them's fighting words to a Trekkie, alurin. And you would win that fight. because the typical Trekkie lacks muscle mass.

[Reply](#)

- [wookiee](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 12:38pm

They make a point to say alternate timeline, and as we know multiple universes exist in Star Trek, so somewhere things are turning out exactly as they did, while here they will turn out differently, even if only slightly.

I think it was easy and maybe a little cheesy, but completely necessary to restart the continuity without eliminating what we already know.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 1:09pm

I think it would have been more elegant to go with El Santo's suggestion: start over, ignore the canon, and beat up the Trekkies who protest.

[Reply](#)

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 1:58pm

@Zack, I have no idea where Winona Kirk was, but she seemed absent and I guess I just linked it that she was dead and Matt Parkman was now in charge of Baby Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 3:11pm

She seemed to survive the space battle, at any rate. Would be a bummer to croak in some mundane way back on Earth after that. :P

As for the other universe thing - you could ask yourself why this particular black hole leads to an alternate timeline, while others just seem to send you back along the same timeline you were in. Best answer I can come up with? It's narratively convenient.

[Reply](#)

- [Harbinger of the Arockalypse](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 3:12pm

She was off-planet when kid-Kirk was driving around listening to the Beastie Boys, so she's probably somewhere.

I liked that they made it an alternate timeline. Let this one develop, let the other canon exist for those who want it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/22/09 3:33pm

@Doc Eon: Of course, we still have to solve the thorny problem of why the black hole at the beginning of the movie sense you back in time, whereas the one at the end of the movie destroys you... oh, wait, same answer!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D-The One Lettered Man

5/23/09 6:37pm

### Reply

- 5/23/09 8:03pm

Reply

- 5/24/09 2:11pm

Reply

- 5/29/09 3:36pm

Reply

5/22/09 10:35pm

### Reply

- 5/22/09 11:07pm

### Reply

- 5/23/09 3:46pm

434



And they ahted it, and were no longer interested in watching Star Trek at my house like I'd suggested.. And the worst part? I knew they were right. My butt hurt too.

i've seen it since and own the Director's cut (better effects, still not up to today's standards, but nothing to be done about the story, a cting or pacing).

My grade D. Far from up to ST TOS standards, and not even up to general Sci-Fi standards, especially before they'd been lowered by all the other low-flying Trek turkies to come.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Captain Jamuary

5/24/09 4:03am

Yes, IFTD, 1941 was, at the time an exciting movie for a hyperactive movie fiend in 1979 (from the guy who made Jaws and Close Encounters!). And actually, I still stand by it — it's not very funny, which makes it fail as a comedy, but it is stunningly well-made, has stood the test of time, and laid the groundwork for today's busy sense of movie making, for good and ill.

ST: TMP has to be viewed within the context of its production era but it is also a better movie beyond that (though not to the degree that II, IV, and VI are). Why do the TNG movies largely fail? They were made without a break from the series. A big part of TMP's appeal had to do with the times (and this accounts for its perceived "flaws" as well), the fact that ten years had elapsed between the series and the first film. The tour around the Enterprise in 70mm and Jerry Goldsmrh-ized sound was a dream come true for this kid and I still think it's a bravura display of light and music when I go back and look at it.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Captain Jamuary

5/24/09 9:42am

I don't think an unfunny comedy could be said to "stand the test of time."

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Captain Jamuary

5/24/09 1:38pm

All of Spielberg's movies are "well made." Doesn't change the fact that many of them are crap (I'm looking at you, Always). I think it really comes down to the difference between being a pre-teen in 1979 or being a teen. After the 1-2 punch of Jaws and CE3K, El Spielbergo was a god and I devoured everything connected to him I could (even despite my first ever experience of moral outrage at the softening of the ending of Jaws the book [Dreyfuss doesn't survive]). 1941 is still sucked.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Captain Jamuary

5/24/09 3:31pm

1941 definitely nearly put the kibosh on the wunderkind's career, by his own admission...

He just really doesn't do comedy, for whatever reason. I agree that it was ahead of it's time in many ways, but the fact remains that a film should be judges by the expectations it puts forward: A spectacle should amaze, an Action-adventure should excite, and Comedy should make you laugh.

Failure. (Though I did laugh at Ackyroyd putting oranges inside the stocking over his head iknt he tank and saying 'I'm a bug!' Cost of gag: \$1.50. Chances that Spielberg wrote it: Zero)

I just saw always and... yipes! Once again, I think the funny stuff just sinks like a stone.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Captain Jamuary

5/24/09 4:54pm

No doubt the SNL/Animal House/Spielberg pedigree looked great on paper...

(How cute, Spielberg made it into spellcheck!)

(And "spellcheck" did not!!)

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Captain January

5/24/09 11:26pm

Anyway... my point was that within a few months of each other, a young film fan got Alien, Apocalypse Now, ST:TMP, and 1941 and the fact is you can STILL take On ALL these movies and argue about them with intelligence and passion. There aren't too many recent years, in terms of studio pictures, that can inspire that.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Captain January

5/25/09 12:28am

OK, I'm convinced. '79 was a pretty damn good year:

<http://www.imdb.com/List?ye...>

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Captain January

5/25/09 10:40am

I totally agree with that, Captain January and Tinsel. I was a Film & Television major in college between 1977 and 1979, and for sheer popcorn moviemaking that was THE period to be alive and sentient.

Even the abysmal failures were fascinating (1941, HEAVEN'S GATE)....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [D.R. Darke](#)Zack Handlen

5/25/09 2:09pm

New ST Movie - Watched Better Than It Sat Afterwards

While I was watching Abrams's new STAR TREK movie, I was loving its thrill ride and shout-outs to ST: TOS. It's thinking it over after you leave the theatre that all the "Now Wait a Minute!" moments start to hit you:

- So now Kirk, Sulu, Chekov, Uhura and Chapel are all within a year or two of each other in age, and went to Starfleet Academy at the same time? (It's sort-of established that both Spock and McCoy are some years older, and came to the Academy after having previous lives.)

- So James T. Kirk completely never learned to play poker in this alternative timeline, and can't bluff to save his life? His cocksure, smug behavior during the third run of the Kobayashi Maru (sp?) Maneuver is what even a beginning poker player would recognize as a blatant "tell" that he's got an ace in the hole. It would have worked better if he'd played it straight and pretended he'd somehow figured a way around certain defeat - and Spock who developed the test only later figured out he had reprogrammed the computer to let him win.

- So now Pike's ENTERPRISE, the Fleet's newest Ship of the Line, is staffed primarily by cadets rather than seasoned officers at most essential stations? The helm is under the control of Cadets Sulu and Chekov, and Cadet Uhura is in charge of Communications on the Bridge. The only Academy graduates we actually meet on the Bridge are Captain Pike and Lieutenant Commander Spock (how long since Spock graduated, anyway?) - and it's strongly implied that Spock is mainly an Instructor with little actual field experience.

At least Cadet McCoy isn't automatically in charge of Sickbay (he took over after his superior was killed during Nero's initial attack), and I believe there was some mention of "Commander So-and-So in Engineering" being injured in time for Scotty to take over.

- So Spock, Nero AND Admiral Archer decide to maroon Kirk, Spock Prime and Scotty on the same iceball at the edge of Federation Space? For that matter, why is Nero marooning Spock Prime anyplace near access to Starfleet?

- And finally - so Kirk goes straight from the Academy to command of the ENTERPRISE? WTF?!?!? Yes, he's got a lot of raw talent and given what he's already accomplished he would absolutely be fast-tracked for command, but Spock was right - he needs to be broken to bridle first. A couple years' seasoning as a subordinate officer under a more experienced commander would make him a MUCH better Captain.

This reminds me of the difference between this movie and Heinlein's excellent juvenile novel SPACE CADET. In the book, Cadet Matt Dodson manages to save a number of civilians' lives and open negotiations with the civilization on Venus - but when he comes back expecting to be given his own command, the head of Space Patrol instead gently informs him of all the things he did wrong, and all the situations where his approach would have been a disaster. Dodson comes out of the meeting realizing how much he still needs to learn, and with a renewed resolve to do so and become a full-fledged member of Space Patrol.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.R. Darke

5/25/09 3:35pm

I'd add Ender's Game as the best example of the "child with genius thrown into a man's world" concept. Though it seems doubtful we'll ever see a movie of it. May be just as well, considering the kind's of "Dune"s we got.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.R. Darke

5/25/09 3:41pm

Those are all good points. And those are less than half of the WTF moments throughout the movie. One can let a few of these slides, but when they come every 5 minutes....

Who builds a starship on the ground? Why does Starfleet Academy hold disciplinary hearings in front of the entire student body? Why did they have to interrupt the disciplinary hearing just because there was a distress call from Vulcan? If the situation on Vulcan seemed so dire, why didn't Pike send a scout ship ahead before dumping his entire fleet into a potentially dangerous situation?

Oh, and what's up with the gratuitous mind meld between Spock Prime and Kirk? Was there any information transferred besides what the audience heard? kirk certainly doesn't give any indication that he knows anything else!

(Nero presumably marooned Spock somewhere where he could see Vulcan being destroyed. Of course, then Nero had to time things so that Spock would not be on the side of Delta Vega facing away from Vulcan... and any planet close enough to Vulcan to see it that clearly would be a moon of Vulcan, and likely sucked into the black hole as well. Anyway, wouldn't it have been simpler to put Spock in a disabled escape pod in space, where he could have an unobstructed view?)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.R. Darke

5/25/09 4:54pm

Oh my god, you totally had me flashing on the "Donald Kaufman" 3rd act of Adaptation. When Nic Cage spies with binoculars on MStreep from across a street... while she has a crucial argument in full view of the window... with her computer monitor at just the right angle so he could see it perfectly... with her precise airline information on the screen... and he pulls up to the airport the moment after she does... Sigh, what a great voice was lost to that alligator. RIP, DK.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)D.R. Darke

5/25/09 10:03pm

@alurin: I knew there were several more WTF?!?!? moments - and those doesn't count the ones you just listed! Even so, I enjoyed the movie enough to look forward to the next one - I just hope they get a writer who has at least a nodding acquaintance with, you know, logic and common sense....

@tinsel: Sorry, but I never read or listen to anything by belligerent closet babyraping polygamist homophobes. (Hmmm - wonder if I've slandered Mormons anywhere near as much as Card and Glenn Beck incessantly slandered gays during the Prop 8 campaign....?)

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D.R. Darke

5/25/09 11:41pm

Woh-HOH, drdarkeny, sure didn't know that about OSCard. Only reason I read Ender's was a friend of mine and I did a "fave book of all time" swap and that was hers. I don't read much sci-fi, and had no idea he was up there in LRon territory. Filing that little nugget away...

Great timing for a Prop 8 posting. Maybe it'll bode well for tomorrow.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.R. Darke

5/26/09 4:19pm

@Not logging in: I remember there being only 7 ships in the task force that went to Vulcan. If that's a big enough loss to Starfleet that delinquent cadets get promoted to captain, then the fleet must be pretty small!

Similarly, I don't think 99% of Starfleet was taken out at Wolf 359. Nevertheless, you are correct that the crew would have moved up rapidly, even without the losses to the Borg. Riker probably should have been forced to retire after declining three promotions to captain.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)D.R. Darke

5/26/09 5:04pm

My problem with Card isn't the rabid homophobia, it's the endless recycling and repackaging of Ender's Game. It was a good novel, we all liked it. Did it really need 10 sequels?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.R. Darke

5/26/09 8:46pm

@Aqualad: Of course, we could say that about Star Trek as well!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)D.R. Darke

5/27/09 1:49pm

@Tinsel - sorry about the Orson Scott Card rant, but it's something a lot of people don't realize about him. He was Guest of Honor at a SF Con (with a large gay and gay-sympathetic) my wife and I attended, and the organizers of the Con gave us Hell about opposing his being picked for the position. I suggested that if they chose Card that year, maybe Newt Gingrich (who is also an - alleged - SF writer) should be their GoH the NEXT year...?

Sadly, the CA Supreme Court didn't see it that way - guess they decided that the Tyranny of the Majority is enough to amend their State's Constitution. OTOH, CA gay rights groups are already organizing to re-amend the CA Constitution to undo Prop. 8....

@Not Logging In etc. - It's certainly possible that they lost enough people in Nero's attack that they're promoting anybody remotely promising to command, though I agree w/alurin that Starfleet must be awfully small to promote even promising cadets to a Captaincy right out of the Academy. As you said, it would have made more sense for Kirk to be breveted to Lieutenant Commander and placed in charge of some section (Helm, probably) under a seasoned

commanding officer - which is roughly how Kirk made his way to Captain originally. (I wonder if Matt Decker survived...?)

You're dead-on about the ENTERPRISE TOS and TNG crews, though - if they're remotely as good as alleged, the lot of them should have had their own ships LONG before they did! I think Peter David's novel series STAR TREK: NEW FRONTIER deals with this a bit where Elizabeth Shelby (the Commander who tried to nudge Riker out of his job as Picard's Number One in "Best of Both Worlds") shows up as a major character - and series star Captain Calhoun's former lover and now HIS First Officer (initially): We see Shelby confronting her feelings for Calhoun versus her ambition to rise to the top of Starfleet, and realizing why Riker might have stayed where he was for so long rather than grabbing at the first promotion that came along. There, though, Shelby "gets it all" - she marries Calhoun, gets her own ship and eventually gets promoted to Admiral, while her husband is content to stay in command of a single ship where he thinks he can do the most good....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/25/09 6:57pm

Old Star Trek Retrofitted to look like the New ST!

You may have all seen his by now, but it's very a propos:

<http://blogs.suntimes.com/s...>

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

5/25/09 8:25pm

That's pretty good! I haven't even seen the movie yet and it made me laugh.

In Nick Meyer's (no relation) commentary track on "Khan" he points out that no matter what genre of movie you're watching, you can always tell what decade it was made in, give or take a year or two. (Although he says it in context of explaining why he had Kirk's son wear a preppy sweater around his neck, and admits it was probably a bad idea). So, are hyperactive lens flares gonna be a signature of films for the 2010s?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

5/25/09 8:27pm

You could have Christopher Walken do a new SNL skit - "What this movie needs is...more lens flares!"

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Richelieu Jr

5/25/09 10:09pm

@meyer - how about we just...skip Christopher Walken and Christopher Walken impersonations, okay?

I'm not sure which is worse - hearing high-tech corporate looter Jason Calicanis impersonate Walken every time he's on Leo Laporte's THIS WEEK IN TECH, hearing Nathan Fillion (an actor I really like!) embarrass himself impersonating Walken in the last episode of CASTLE this season...or hearing Christopher Walken himself do a worse Walken impersonation than either Fillion or Calicanis!

Chris, please - do us a favor and get Mickey Rourke's agent to find you a career-saving role, and remind yourself (and us!) that you used to be one of the great movie actors of the Seventies and early Eighties.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Richelieu Jr

5/25/09 10:15pm

PS: Richelieu Jr. - ROTFL! on the "Making Old STAR TREK look like New STAR TREK" clip!

It's - perfect. It gets Abrams's directorial tics down cold....

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

5/25/09 11:49pm

A much needed great laugh, RJ. I don't fee quite so alone. (And despite my being the exact person it ridicules, gotta give some props to the spot-on Onion clip.)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

5/26/09 1:09pm

@ (~nicholas) meyer: I saw a documentary about the making of "Dr. Zhivago", in which someone pointed out that you can always tell when a movie was made by looking at the hairstyles, particularly on the women.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

5/27/09 10:20am

I fi had to choose the absolute low-point in Trek, stories and design mixed up together, it would be the women's hairstyles: From Yeoman Rand and Dr Crusher, up to today. It's like the world's worst hair-salon catalogue...

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

5/27/09 12:36pm

Hardly disagree, but still - you leave my Waffle-head alone!!!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Skipskatte](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 11:42pm

Mental movie

You know, I've got a movie trilogy in my head that would actually wrap up the TNG series in a respectable way. Kind of a Lord of the Rings for TNG, DS9, and Voyager fans. It involves an attack upon the entire Alpha and Gamma quadrant by the Borg, im a way that is unusual to them. Of course, it will never leave my head . . .

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 10:00am

"Of course, it will never leave my head . . . "

Unless the Voices have their way!

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 10:29am

Yeah, when they try to escape the booze and the drugs cram them back in.

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 3:07pm

I dreamed something like that up, once, when I was a kid. Although I think in my version, It was some outside threat, so even the Borg ended up on the "good guys" side. I really would loved to see something like that.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 3:40pm

I was just in FNAC, a sort of big Parisian Virgin Megastore where they were advertising "The Trilogy that started it all, inspiring the new Star Trek movie!"

That 'trilogy' of course being, Star Treks II thru IV, inclusive. Who knew?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 8:08pm

well, it does make a trilogy.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Skipskatte

5/23/09 11:12pm

I like to think of it as an elevenilogy.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Skipskatte

5/24/09 9:29am

I think the idea was that V-X didn't exist, which is not a bad idea. Maybe i should move to France!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Skipskatte

5/24/09 3:32pm

Come on in, the water's fine and the economic crisis is hardly noticable!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Skipskatte

5/24/09 11:34pm

I hear the food's good too.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 8:37am

Bah on TMP

Nobody was looking forward more to ST:TMP than I was. I was a total Star Trek geek: I could identify episodes just from clips; had read all of the Blish adaptations; the amazing Alan Dean Foster adaptations of The Animated Series (which I'd watched, dutifully, every Saturday morning while it was on); I'd read all of the authorized fiction like "Spock Must Die."

And single-handedly, The Motion Picture was such a turgid, preachy mess that it killed all of the love I'd built up in the previous decade stone cold dead.

Wrath of Khan, NextGen & DS9 have rekindled it somewhat, but seeing that movie was like the first time you realize your parents are human and fuck up, too.

I've seen it a couple of times since, and I don't get the revisionist "it's really OK" point of view at all.

The new movie, however, rocks!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

5/22/09 10:41am

Wow, you must be, like, way old. I was 4.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

5/22/09 11:40am

I was 8 when Khan came out and my dad took me to see it in the theater. The ear eels freaked me out for, like, 20 years thereafter.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)barefoot jim

5/22/09 5:39pm

My chick still won't watch Wrath of Khan because she saw it when she was a kid and freaked the fuck out at the ear worm.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

5/23/09 4:41pm

I totally agree with this post.. IT's almost if it were written by my twin.. but he seems nice so.. Who's the evil one?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)barefoot jim

5/23/09 8:02pm

I can identify with the first paragraph: Alan Dean Foster was the shit!

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)barefoot jim

5/24/09 12:51am

Foster also wrote the first Star Wars novel, Splinter of the Mind's Eye. Darn good. And I've been saying "shigret" for cigarette ever since.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

5/24/09 2:10pm

I think he did the 'Alien' novelisation as well.. And I have to admit, 'Splinter' did me up good as a wee boy!

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)barefoot jim

5/29/09 6:47pm

THEY PUT CREATURES IN OUR BODIES!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 8:18am

TMP

Good reviews again, but I'm going to be a bit fanboyish and step up and defend TMP a bit. When you talk about the flight over to the Enterprise, you talk about how it seems overly-long. But back then, this was every Trek fans dream. Not only to see the Enterprise (bigger and newer looking to boot) on the big screen, but this was somewhat like the new Star Trek film is to us- a chance to reboot the series and get it going again. This was also a re-introduction to the Enterprise, a character itself.



Yeah, them flying through the cloud is long, but what saves that part is the score from Goldsmith. I bought the CD just for the flythrough track, and when they are flying over V'Ger itself. It is some great film music.

This is why I can't be a critic- I can't pull myself out from those memories of watching it as transfixed as you were in my childhood. But when I watch it today I see it in another light as well, but not as harsh (I would give it a B).

Still, keep up the awesome reviews. I love em.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Right Wingnut

5/22/09 8:27am

Just wanted to stress again, I really do love Goldsmith's score. In fact, I think I'm gonna listen to it right now...

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

5/22/09 9:12am

I remember one reviewer wrote about how one of the show's themes was Kirk's love for the Enterprise, so in the movie, the time he spends ogling and rotating around her is a form of foreplay before he \*ahem\* goes inside of her.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Right Wingnut

5/22/09 10:08am

I could've gone my whole life without having that image stuck in my mind, Dumbledore Calrissian.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut

5/22/09 10:58am

What's worse is Scotty's the one guiding him in! try getting that out of your head!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Right Wingnut

5/22/09 1:08pm

"I'd like to release her docking clamps."

[Reply](#)

- [Scott Pilgrim](#)Right Wingnut

5/29/09 6:46pm

The refit NCC-1701 is so freaking awesome. The new JJ Enterprise isn't bad but the TMP Enterprise will always be my number one... starship. What a nerd. Loved Scotty's line in JJ Trek about the Enterprise's "ample nacelles".

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/23/09 3:37pm

Crazy French Accents

IN/RE Chekov,

I've seen the new film twice here in France, and his lines were getting huge laughs... The first time I was really confused, because the joke is his accent, and there's no way the French are picking up on his W's and V's in English.. I certainly couldn't have made out even outrageously Russian-accented French before having spent a few years in France, and even making room for my stupidity, I know how well these cats speak English... I then decided that there must have been a little letter replacement in the subtitles, like they do with evil Nazis in WWII films...

The next time I saw it, I watched the translation closely and... nothing!

I asked my French girlfriend (she's reading over my shoulder now and saying, "As oposed ot your Spanish or English ones?") why people were laughing, and she said "Because it's funny."

I asked "yes, but why?"

She said, alittle defensive, "You were laughing!"

I said, "Yes, but I wasn't the only one and everyone wasn't laughing because of me. Why were they laughing?"

And she said... "Because he talks funny!"

Does that mean his accent? I have no idea because the subject is now closed chez nous.

Any guesses?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Richelieu Jr

5/23/09 5:11pm

M Richelieu, you are a very patient man. You can help improve your gf's already impeccable English by telling here that the phrase "My girlfriend, who happens to be French" is considered awkward. At least on this side of the pond, maybe it's a Brit thing.

There are subtleties of dialect and culture that will always be lost on a foreign audience. Just the price we have to pay to expand our own dimensions - unless a helpful bf is nearby to help fill in the blanks.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

5/23/09 8:06pm

My guess: he talks funny, and the computer couldn't understand him. That's funny enough, You don't have to understand exactly why the computer didn't understand him.

MY girlfriend (who is fluent in Russian) tells me that the V/W thing is really Polish.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

5/24/09 3:35pm

Wery interesting!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Richelieu Jr

5/26/09 1:00pm

So, in the theater, was the French audience all like, "Oh ho ho ho ho ho!"

That said, I think slapstick/vaudeville humor — and funny voices — go over much better in Europe than in the US. Jerry Lewis is the popular example, but Mr. Bean fits the bill, too.

[Reply](#)

- [bunuel](#)Zack Handlen

5/26/09 1:56pm

My brother and I saw ST: TMP when I was 6 and he was 8

We didn't like it. Our parents encouraged us to write the producers a letter, in which we called them "fags" and made a number of suggestions on how the movie could have been improved with the addition of more space battles.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)bunuel

5/26/09 4:33pm

Your parents must be so proud.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)bunuel

5/26/09 5:02pm

Fags.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)bunuel

5/26/09 7:37pm

Out of cigarettes again, Mr. Aqualad?

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)bunuel

5/26/09 8:12pm

You be nice!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Zack Handlen

5/23/09 3:21pm

The slime's coming home!

It struck me while watching the new Star Trek that the Romulan ship looked like an evil version of Red Dwarf- anyone else agree? When they revealed that it was a former mining ship containing the last remnants of their race, I was amused.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Jimmy James

5/23/09 8:07pm

Oh that's good! i didn't catch that.

Sadly, it was probably unintentional.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Jimmy James

5/24/09 3:33pm

But where did the 'Red Matter' come from?

Melted down Red Dwarf DVDs!

[Reply](#)

- [Bender Bukowski](#)Zack Handlen

5/23/09 6:08pm

The glimmer of connection

seemed kind of apparent when kirk accepted spock as science officer. Just because young spock knows he did the mind meld thing w/his older self, which is kind of one sided intimacy - like celebrity, or soap opera amnesia. Or having a coworker look over you're facebook. Unless im reading too much into a film designed to be wholly accessible to the typical jr. high schooler.

Also - did anyone else get a late era worlds finest superman/batman vibe off those two? Spocks new situation overlaps w/kal-el to the point of being synonymous, vulcan quirks being his deus ex machina "powers"...and kirks ethically questionable, socially unacceptable blood feud is bruce wayne in a nutshell.

[Reply](#)

- [iwilleatyourorigami](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 3:11am

my first exposure to star trek

This was the first start to finish Star Trek anything I've ever seen. I loved it. Because I liked it so much my girlfriend tried to get me to watch a few original episodes streaming from netflix. Hoo boy. Not for me. Not even a little. I saw a few snippets of the Next Generation back in the 90's and couldn't get into it.

I'd say Abrams succeeded on some level seeing as how I could have given a shit about Star Trek before his film, and now I'm psyched for the next. I do agree with your script niggles, and the problem with Bana. I think the Frankie Flowers Romulan got more screentime/lines.

As for Chekov, I fucking loved that guy.

[Reply](#)

- [pico79](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 7:01pm

I don't know if I'd say

that Eric Bana was underused. The character Nero was certainly underused, but Bana is such a limited actor that I doubt he'd have been able to do much with the role no matter what. Certainly one of the least memorable villains they've ever had - makes you long for a Khan or a General Chang.

Agreed that the script needed a few more revisions, too. Kinda sloppy and poorly considered, but I found the whole thing generally entertaining and the main characters interesting enough to carry it through. Hopefully the next installment will have room to breathe, since they won't need the exposition.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen

5/22/09 9:16am

Thanks for this!

As promised, I'll be back after I've seen the new movie and it's far too late to join the conversation with any relevant observations.

For right now, I got nothing, except, Zack, love your work, and thanks for doing fan-driven work like this.

[Reply](#)

- [Crassus](#)Zack Handlen

2/04/10 12:44am

This comment is 8 months too late but . . .

Spock didn't complete the purging ritual in TMP. He had to choose between finishing it and joining his shipmates.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Catspaw" / "I, Mudd"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published May 28, 2009

[Comments \(161\)](#)



Space... the final frontier. These are the voyages of the star ship Enterprise, whose ongoing mission is to visit a bunch of strange planets which are invariably done up like amusement park themelands. Here's the wild west world! Here's killer kiddie world! Here's a planet where apes evolved from men! And this week, in "Catspaw," we've got Halloween Town. No Jack Skelington, of course, but there's a spooky castle, a mass of white fog, and the inevitable path-crossing black cat.

Oh, and witches! Maybe Scotland is more appropriate. But whatever the right metaphor is, this is a weird one, make no mistake.

Hell of a hook, too. The Enterprise is doing the usual survey of a new planet; the landing party, which includes Scotty and Sulu, hasn't reported back and Kirk is getting worried. (Why the hell would you send your helmsman and your chief engineer on this kind of mission? I guess Sulu has some training in biology, but Scotty doesn't make any sense at all. Maybe he's looking around for minerals the ship's engines could use.) Uhura gets a hail from Jackson, the party's third, more expendable member, and when Jackson beams back onto the ship, he dies on the transporter pad. After he dies, a voice comes out of his mouth delivering a strange message: "There is a curse on your ship! Leave us or die!"

I like spooky things. Always have, always will. And the first act of "Catspaw" has spooky in spades. When Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam to the planet surface to try and rescue Scotty and Sulu, they run into the afore mentioned bank of fog, and the witches, three translucent phantoms that cackle and call Kirk by name. Like always on the series, the effects are cheap, and if you don't approach them with the right frame of mind, you're not going to get much out of them. But in a charitable light, there's definite atmosphere being generated.

That atmosphere lasts long enough for our trio to make it inside a castle, where they run into a cat, and fall through a stone floor. They wake up chained in a dungeon, with a real skeleton on the wall and everything (check out the wires). Scotty and Sulu show up, and wouldn't you know it, they've got the mind control whammy on 'em. They unchain Kirk and the others to lead them to the head bad guy, and when Kirk makes his move to escape, everybody's instantly

transported to a throne room. The place has a certain "community theater King Arthur" vibe (sort of Middle Eastern as well), and there's a chubby bald man with a goattee. His name is Korob, and he tells Kirk that they've "passed" some test, and now the real fun can begin.

The atmosphere goes away at this point. I like the writer behind "Catspaw," Robert Bloch, well enough (he wrote the novel *Psycho* is based on, and while it's not as good as the movie, it's not half-bad), but when he doesn't have a good central idea, he tends to flounder. And he flounders here. It has a few striking images, but there's no real momentum or suspense, and in some ways, it just seems like a rehash of old ideas, with a little new spice for flavor. Korob and his partner Sylvia (who switches between human and cat form as the moment requires) are two more in a long line of god-like beings, but fortunately, they've got some limits to their power. Plus, when it comes to people, they're just not that bright.

It's been a while since Kirk had to seduce somebody to save the day, hasn't it? Thankfully, the wait is over. Korob and Sylvia have abducted the Enterprise crew because they want to know more about modern science; they're both wickedly powerful sorcerers (with a wand that serves as a "transmuter" of their power), but they don't cotton much to warp drive or phaser tech. It's odd—Sylvia is strong enough to make a voodoo-type mini-Enterprise, endangering the whole ship at her whim, but all she really wants is to know the mysteries behind a digital watch. The motives are never hugely clear, although we're given to believe these are emissaries of some other race, and that they're supposed to bring something back. "The Old Ones" is all we hear (given that Bloch was a protege of H.P. Lovecraft, I kind of wonder at the choice of words here); like much of the episode, this is under-realized.

Whatever her ultimate motive, Sylvia has one far more immediate need: in order to deal with Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, she's made herself a woman, and, as she explains to Kirk, she is *all* woman. She wants some lovin', and who better than our own hunk of man-meat to provide it? Again, this is sort of familiar, and while you definitely get a sense of the differences between Korob and Sylvia (he's something of a worrywart, and not as strong as she is), you never get caught up in either their struggles or in Kirk's attempts to save everyone's lives. McCoy is mind-controlled, Kirk does his pheromone thing, and there's a falling out between the two villains that has Korob trying to get Kirk and Spock out of the castle to freedom. Scuffling ensues, and Sylvia becomes a giant cat that eventually crushes Korob under a steel door, before making one last desperate plea to Kirk to join her. But Kirk has the magic wand now, and as is his way with things he doesn't entirely understand, he's gonna smash the hell out of it. The instant the crystal's broken, the castle disappears, and the day is saved.

You'll pardon me if I don't get too in-depth with this one. I like the trappings, but the whole thing is half-assed, blandly enjoyable on the surface, but with little to recommend it upon further reflection. The story's too loose, with a good ten minutes devoted to Chekov and the others struggling in vain to get the Enterprise free, and Sylvia's problems aren't developed enough to matter. But it's not a total waste. The idea that the aliens' attempts to communicate on a "human" level is based off antiquated notions of humanity is neat, although it doesn't really go anywhere. There are some striking camera angles, like the two odd close-ups we get of Korob, and as clumsy as it is, the awkwardness of the giant cat stuff has a definite charm. And the final reveal of what Sylvia and Korob really are... Look, I'm sure most people saw that and laughed. They're these ridiculous contraptions made of what looks like shrimp and blue fur, and you can see the hundreds of strings holding the damn things up. They can't be more than a few inches tall each, and they're goddamn *absurd*.

I dig it, though. There's something freakish about those damn things, something that makes them truly alien, in spite (or maybe because) of the tackiness of the design. "Catspaw" isn't all that strong, but those few times it works, it's like nothing we've seen on the series before.

So Sylvia and Korob, despite their remarkable powers, wanted something from the Enterprise and its crew. And wouldn't you know it, the androids that make a mess of things in "I, Mudd," want something from the Enterprise, too. But while Korob and Sylvia were content to just wait till somebody showed up that they could assault, the robots of planet Mudd are pro-active. They've got an agent aboard the ship before the episode even starts. Sure, McCoy doesn't trust him—we get a rare conversation here where Spock is actually wrong for once—but his instincts don't stop the 'bot, a guy named Norman, from taking control of the ship and effectively commandeering it back to his home planet.

And guess who's waiting back at home: a couple hundred thousand androids, and our favorite campy smuggling bastard, Harcourt Fenton Mudd, is lording over them all. Norman arranges for Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Chekov, and Uhura to beam down, where they find Mudd apparently ruling over a harem of cybernetic hotties. Mudd is fine form, having escaped from his last felonious escapade relatively unscathed (the scene here, with Mudd telling his story and Kirk, Spock, and McCoy translating, is fun), but while he's grateful to all the androids he's designed—including an ill-advised copy of his shrewish wife that he can ignore at his leisure—he wants to move on.

Only problem, the robo-buddies won't let him. Their creators are long gone, having built the androids as help-mates only for their race to stagnate and die, and without anyone to serve, the machines are at a total loss. Harry Mudd was a lucky break for them, and they're not in any mood to let him go; that's why Harry arranged for his old friends on the Enterprise to come take his place. Give the robots hundreds of new masters, and provide himself with an exit strategy? Sounds like a win-win.

And hey, who wouldn't want to be pampered by a hundreds of attractive, willing servants who can provide you with anything you desire? As the androids beam down the ship's crew, Kirk becomes concerned as to how his people will react to being offered their heart's desire. (This seems to have happen with surprising frequency to the Enterprise; either the crew is so loyal that mutiny never even occurs to them, or else Kirk's got whole rooms full of compromising photographs.) McCoy's entranced by the medical equipment, Chekov is infatuated with the various hotties on display, and even Uhura is tempted at the thought of having her brain put into a robotic body that will stay forever beautiful. What has Kirk got to offer than can compete?

Thankfully, this question becomes moot once the androids' full plan is revealed. Having decided that humanity is too sick to keep running its own business, Norman and the others want to get pro-active; they're going to leave their planet, and stop sentient life from destroying itself. Now it's not just the Enterprise that's at risk—it's a universe unprepared for a race of highly intelligent, extremely determined nannies. But Kirk and Spock have figured out the androids' weakness—they don't do so well with irrationality. Time for a full on attack of the crazies!

After "Catspaw," "I, Mudd" is a comparatively tight fifty minutes of TV. If you liked Harry Mudd from his first appearance (and I did), you'll like him here; Roger Carmel is as flamboyant as ever, clearly having the time of his life, and there is substantially less upsetting neck hair this time around. Even better, the androids are a believable, clever threat, and their decision to take a hand in the affairs of the people they're supposedly serving is a good twist. Writer Stephen Kandel is taking some cues from Isaac Asimov here, and there are definitely worse sources to steal from.

And how about that climax? To defeat the machines, Kirk and the others engage in a series of bizarre, nonsensical skits, confronting the androids with impossible to resolve contradictions and lies. It's goofy, but charmingly surreal, like Spock's famous, "I love you. And I hate you." scene or the crew's heretofore unexplored talent for mime. We've had computers broken up by illogic before, but this is the first time everybody's gotten in on the act. There's something infectiously silly about all of it. The acting isn't exactly brilliant, but it's a hoot in its own way. I can see somebody watching the last ten minutes of "Mudd" and being put off the series for life; or else I can see somebody getting turned into a Trek fan for the rest of their days. Me, I lean towards the latter.

Not that "Mudd" is flawless. While it's great to see Uhura getting to do more, it's lame how her happiness revolves around staying pretty forever and ever. (At least, that's the part of the robot's pitch she acts most interested in. You'd think getting your brain stuck in a perpetually powerful android body would have a lot of benefits beyond being physically appealing.) It's odd that the entire crew of the Enterprise beams down to the planet but we only ever see the usual gang of misfits. Budgetary concerns aside, a few extras in Starfleet uniforms wandering around all blissed out in the background would've been nice.

The ending bugs me, too. Once the robots are defeated, Kirk and the others reprogram them to get to work cultivating the planet. As punishment for his crimes, Mudd is left behind with the 'bots, which is reasonable; only Kirk has let Harry's robot wife out of captivity to torment him, which is slightly less justified. Worse, Kirk has made *copies*. It's supposed to be funny—ha-ha, the lazy man is getting stuck in the Land of the Shrews!—but it's not. It kind of wrecks

the charming vibe of the rest of the episode. Harry is legitimately horrified, and as nagging harpy after nagging harpy floods the room, you can't help but feel bad for the idiot.

Overall, though, "Mudd" is a hoot. Campy without being insulting, and just as smart as it needs to be, it's pretty much for fans only; but for fans, it's a treat.

**Grades:**

**"Catspaw": B-**

**"I, Mudd": A-**

**Stray Observations:**

- After the witches do their verse—Kirk: "Spock, comment?" Spock: "Very bad poetry, Captain."
- It's too bad the "trick or treat" stuff gets dropped so quickly in "Catspaw"; the ep could've used stronger focus.
- Sylvia changes her form, but it's always the same actress. Just different wigs.
- Speaking of wigs, thank god Chekov loses his between "Catspaw" and "I, Mudd."
- I'm getting my wisdom teeth pulled next week, so we're going to take a brief break. But be back here June 11 for "Metamorphosis" and "Journey To Babel."

**DISCUSSION**

- Community (160)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 11:03am

Mudd's Wife

Man, I get that gains were made by feminism and all, but it really is a shame we don't see women like Mudd's wife on tv anymore. Ya know, they have names like Irma and Gladys or Agnes. They dress exclusively in slippers, nightgowns, and have curlers in their hair. The chase their loutish fun-loving hubbies with rolling pins. Instead we just see wives that are beautiful and loving partners.

Harcooooouuurrrttt!!!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [X-Ray](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 11:10am

Why put it on tv when you have it sitting next to you?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 11:21am

Grass is always greener, X-Ray.

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 12:07pm

Edna Kravitz!



[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 1:34pm

The Mudds were kinda like the Space Ropers. They should've done a spin-off.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 2:45pm

Actually, a Star Trek series not centered on the quasi-military Starfleet, but rather on a space traveling rascal and scalawag could be highly entertaining.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 3:07pm

Like Firefly?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 3:19pm

Listen to the commentary on the Firefly episode where they go on board the Alliance cruiser. Whedon talks alot about how he wanted Firefly to be the anti-Star Trek and shot the Alliance cruiser in a Star Trek style, i.e. clean set, good lighting, fixed camera. It was an interesting contrast.

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 3:49pm

I would watch the Space Ropers if Jeffrey Tambor was on board. And there should be an alien kid with a bowl cut.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 4:36pm

Yeah, but like a lot of other sci-fi, one problem with Firefly is that they had to work too hard to avoid the way Star Trek defined and dominated space adventure in the culture. Transporters "beam" people, ships travel at "warp speed," etc. Battlestar Galactica managed to avoid it pretty well by concentrating on the people, rather than the hardware and techno-babble. Stargate eventually gave up after a while and just called matter transport "beaming." They'd make a Star Trek reference once in a while, rather than just ignore it.

If you don't go along with the conventions established by Star Trek, you end up wasting a lot of time flying around in shuttles or going into hypersleep or some other such shit. On one hand, a lot of talented people were kind of forced into writing for a Star Trek universe who might have come up with some incredible and fresh sci-fi ideas. On the other hand Star Trek gives people a nice shorthand to use, so every new show does have to re-invent the wheel, and can instead concentrate on writing stories about people, rather than the gizmos.

So I have mixed feelings about it.

[Reply](#)

- [Vladimir Pootin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 6:26pm

I have mixed feelings about Firefly too. It's pretentious and hackneyed yet I can't pull my eyes away from all the stupefyingly hot babes Whedon manages to cast in all of his series. If only that casting couch could talk....

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 8:42pm

Vlad-

I think Gentile had mixed feelings about the Star Trek conventions (like beaming, not like weekend at Holiday Inn). I for one think Firefly was great and wish there was at least one more season of it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 11:41pm

Gentile: I disagree about the Star Trek conventions. True, you can't do space opera without FTL travel, but there are other ways of dealing with that besides warp drive (see B5, BSG). And flying around in shuttles isn't really a waste of time, any more than standing on the transporter pad and saying "energize" is a waste of time.

The key is not to get into the details of it. Until near the end, BSG avoided discussing the technology, they just used it. TOS was pretty good about that, later iterations not so much. B5 was somewhere in between. I thought Firefly did a very good job of not telling us how they travelled FTL, just doing it.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 3:56am

The funny thing is that throughout the run of Firefly I just assumed they were doing FTL in some hand-waved way, and then I see the opening of Serenity...

Apparently they've just been buzzing around one (rather big) solar system the whole time, and never going FTL at all. What a cool concept.

What's that you say? How come the planets farther from the "core", and thus presumably farther from the sun, have warmer temperatures? Sssshhh, it's a western, the frontier has to be hot and arid, dontcha know.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 10:24am

I've only just seen 'Serenity' and never saw 'Firefly', but I quite like it...

in/re Herpes and Alurin, I think one of the advantages of a lot of the Trek stuff, especially beaming is that it enables you to effectively condense stories. While Alurin is quite right in saying that it's not written in stone that a shuttle trip has to be a waste of time narratively, just imagine if it had to be dealt with in these episodes.. You think it's unbelievable that the whole crew beamed down? How about that multiple shuttle trips were organized in that amount of time? And what were our guys doing? You'd end up with a lot of ellipses, flashes forward and in general difficult story diagrams trying to plot where everyone is at one. Also, you end up doing exposition or general character stuff on the shuttles, and then lots of intros and scenes on landing strips and shuttle bays (see BSG, Star Wars, for starters... Now way: Beam me right into the heart of the action say I, science be damned.

Of course, this is better for space opera and action shows than it is for anything even nodding at realism...

And how did BSG avoid Warp drive? A jump by any other name...

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 12:07pm

I think people who don't read a lot of Sci-Fi always quantify FTL with Star Trek Warp. But there are several different long standing conventions for Space travel.

1) Good old fashion Near light speed travel. The most physically plausible, basically with no friction you can constantly accelerate until you hit the speed of light. What happens then depends on setting. Its the slowest form of travel but Eisteinium physics also says time will move slower for those in the ship. The big problem with this type of travel is getting the fuel to get up to the speed and then having the fuel to slow down. See Enders Game, Aliens and some others. Mostly these are the ones with guys crysleeping

2) Warp Drive. This one is hard to explain because in Trek it has been redefined and retconned so many times. I think the going theory is that they warp space around the ship so that it can somehow defy the Light speed barrier. Its also been rather hand wavey. See Trek

3) Hyperdrive. The classic example is Star Wars but there are others. Can't go faster then the speed of light in this universe, but what about a close parallel dimension. See Star Wars

4) Jump gates and wormholes. Ships can't go faster then light but you can either find or make worm holes that connect to points in space. This is what B5 uses as well as farscape. Wormholes are a sci-fi staple so they appear in a lot of places as well. Technically Star Gate falls here too.

5) Space Folding. Moving a ship from one spot in the universe to another without any of that inconvient ripping holes in universe or dimension travel. This appears to be what BSG uses. Same with a lot of Anime series. Moya on Farscapes star burst might also be a form.

Whats sad is that basically all but one of these forms of travel are most likely impossible. Damn reality and its boringness

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 1:08pm

@Nilus: thanks! I was going to post a similar inventory. It's true that all but #1 are probably impossible.

I see a continuum here, actually, from 2-5. The different options have different implications for how you construct your stories. Warp drive basically means "we're going to ignore relativity". Ships move continuously through normal space. This is in my opinion the default mode in filmed SF. Look at not just Trek but the original Battlestar Galactica, and Firefly. This basically allows for conventional, earthbound narratives translocated to outer space. Points that are far apart take longer to travel between, you can chase people, etc.

Hyperdrive means acknowledging relativity, or at least the light speed limit, and circumventing it by having ships move through a parallel dimension. For narrative purposes, this is pretty similar to warp drive, in that travel takes time, and travel times are typically related to distances in normal space. In Star Wars, it seems that you can't chase through hyperspace. In Babylon-5, hyperspace is linked to jump gates. You can chase someone through hyperspace, but (unless you have superior technology) you can only enter/emerge at fixed points, which creates strategic chokeholds.

Wormholes and space folding (e.g. Moore's BSG's jump drives) offer instantaneous transportation, the main difference being that wormholes imply fixed points, a la jump gates, whereas a jump drive essentially makes a temporary wormhole. The nice thing about space folding is that it makes a narrative like BSG possible. In the original BSG, it's completely implausible that the Cylons, moving at "warp speeds" through normal space, wouldn't be able to overtake the sluggish ragtag fleet. In the 21st century version, jump drives mean that you can't be followed, making it much more believable that the ragtag fleet could get away from the Cylons.

@Richelieu Jr: Star Trek spends plenty of time dispensing exposition on the transporter pad. And there's no reason that you have to show all the takeoffs and landings for shuttles. The big disadvantage of transporters is that they're TOO convenient: you have to come up with some nonsense to explain why you can't beam your heroes out of trouble (see Abrams Trek movie, where the drill disables transporters. why? 'cause otherwise it would be too easy!). I can't think of a single SF TV series since Trek that has used transporter-like technology as a regular plot device.

@Doc Eon: Really? I don't remember that from Serenity. I assume that they're using "warp drive". That would have to be a really implausibly huge system, even more implausible that the 12 colonies in BSG!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 5:12pm

@Alurin: I quite agree with the drawback of beaming being TOO convenient! Given that in the new Trek they beam people from a planet to a Warp-Speed ship far away, I wonder what sorts of knots they'll have to tie themselves into to explain why that can't always work!

@Nilus: Thanks for a learned and interesting outline of these different methods. It may be a result of my lack of understanding, and I've certainly not followed the different retcons, but my understanding of Warp Drive was that it was warping time/space to move two distant points closer together, thus negating the necessity for passing the speed of light, a sort of 'get out of jail free' card for Einsteinian physics... In this way, numbers 2,3 and 5 have always seemed the same to me (though I can certainly see arguments against: Implied other dimensions, like with the wormholes for one)...

I know they discuss Warp 1...2...3... like they're accelerating, but I've always truly understood it as a factor of bending space time, which is why it is measured in factors... (That said, to be honest, I understand these things mostly as storytelling tools, which may be evident from my physics explanations here).

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 8:01pm

I understood Warp Speed was a misnomer, in that a warp field is generated around the ship that establishes it's own kind of small "bubble" outside normal spacetime, but the more power you put in the engines, the faster (relative to external spacetime) you're able to go. In the first Pilot episode, they called it "Time Warp Factor," but I guess that got too confusing.

Roddenberry and L.Ron Hubbard were lousy pulp fiction writers, not physicists.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 9:18pm

The imaginary physics is beside the point, for me. Whatever the technobabble explanation, ships at warp speed seem to just move very very fast, but you can see them coming (unless they're cloaked), chase them, throw stuff at them, etc. And you can look out the windows of a ship at warp speed and see the stars streaming by, so you know that you're moving very fast.

As opposed to ships in hyperspace, where you see something different (or nothing) out the window, or ships with jump drives, where you just magically appear at your destination without any intervening travel

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/30/09 9:23am

Regarding the shuttlecraft vs transporter - another factor would be that for every planetside set, the production crew would have to drag the shuttle out and set it up somewhere, and set space and time were apparently at a premium. Plus, location shooting would be even more expensive if they had to drag the shuttle along too.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/30/09 8:15pm

Every other space opera show I can think of deals with that, from BSG to Firefly back to Space:1999. You don't have to show all the takeoffs and landings.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/30/09 10:26pm

The whole crew did beam down at least once - in "This Side of Paradise", and I think maybe one or two more. Kirk was the last man left to leave and turn out the lights and was going to beam himself off. Enterprise as the Mary Celeste.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/31/09 10:38am

Yes, but note that they didn't actually bother to show the whole crew beaming down. You just need to show the last crewmember beaming off, just as you only need to show the last shuttle departing the hangar bay.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 9:02am

Didn't Mudd have a three-peat in the Animated Series?

I'd love to see that on your long list of to-do's, Zach. My buddy has the set and swears by it, essentially its season 4(they had scripts expecting a fourth season.. those poor fools).

Great review as usual, always liked Catspaw as a kid, especially the piano music as Kirk and Spock make the escape, and Spock tossing the wand to Kirk through the trapdoor was reenacted many times in the playroom.

Good times, thanks again.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 10:15am

A quick romp through the Animated series would be enjoyable. The episodes are short (obviously) and somewhat stretched out (think the Ace and Gary fight scene loops), so you could probably do 3 or 4 in a crack.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 12:07pm

The Animated Series is pretty damn good if you can forgive the animation. Both Mudd and Koloth/tribbles return. Come to think of it, Roger Carmel even brought Harry Mudd to the 25th Anniversary video game.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 12:26pm

Amusingly enough, I read somewhere that most of the alien planet backgrounds done for TAS wound up being used later on for "He-Man." Filmmation: recycling before recycling was cool.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 2:12pm

They tried to have Mudd reappear on an early season of TNG but sadly Roger Carmel had passed before they could get it to fruition.

I have some hopes that the next Star Trek movie will have an appearance of Harry Mudd in some shape or form.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 2:40pm

Having an interesting, fun-loving character like Harry Mudd appear in TNG would also shockingly contrast with the bland, tight-assedness of the TNG Enterprise crew.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 2:41pm

I'm sure there would be a hilarious segment with him in the briefing room.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 3:36pm

I remember an episode of TNG where they tried to introduce a fun-loving rascal type (more Han Solo than Harry Mudd).

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 3:41pm

That was "The Outrageous Okona", a particularly terrible episode of TNG. Case in point: Joe Piscopo.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 3:53pm

Were there any briefings? If so, I'm there!

[Reply](#)

- [Dutch Missourian](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 6:27pm

@Wingnut: They also tried to fit Mudd into the new Trek film, but couldn't find a way to do it.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 10:38pm

I don't recall the animated episode with Harry Mudd, but there was a collection titled "Mudd's Enterprise" that had novelizations of the two TOS episodes he was in plus an additional story where he trades android brides to miners to corner the market on dilithium.

[Reply](#)

- [Doc Eon](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 3:45am

The thing I always wonder about when Mudd (or Cyrano Jones) comes up is: I thought the Federation had done away with money? So how do these traders/rogues make a profit from their wheeling and dealing?

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 9:35am

I think they trade for valuable stuff, like dilithium, android butlers, and Orion slave girls. What more do you need really?

But don't they mention "credits" a few times in the the series? I always took that to mean money(how would you pay your bar tab at Quark's?) but then I remember Picard saying they did away with money in First Contact to the woman from our time. Maybe they just have a different economic model.... I should try and explain my "different economic model" to my bartender.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 9:59am

I always thought that "credits" were used when dealing with a culture that still uses money.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 10:46am

I've got to call BS on this whole "we've outgrown the need for money" thing. (and please forgive me if you're heard this rant from me before). I realize that the whole point of Star Trek is it's optimism - the idea that humanity will someday rise above it's petty disputes and achieve a more perfect existence. And give that so much of the suffering and injustice today has it's roots in economic inequality, it's a neat idea that we could somehow find a different way, that doesn't require money. But we keep smacking into the cold, hard truth that no matter what economic situation you construct, goods and services have to be exchanged and those goods and services have value. unless you want to regress to a barter-based economy, you can't track that value without using some sort of money, whether you call it - credits, dollars, whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 12:36pm

@Doc Eon, etc.: The "we've outgrown money" thing was introduced in TNG. In TOS, they clearly had money. In "Devil in the Dark", Kirk tells the miners how rich they're going to get, with the horta's digging all the tunnels for them.

@Hercules: As this series of reviews indicates, the theme of TOS was not utopian optimism, but often the opposite: that attempts at perfect usually have negative unintended consequences. Roddenberry had forgotten that by the time of TNG, so he injected some unrealistic utopian ideology.

However, you could construct an economic model that didn't require money, based on surplus instead of scarcity. But nobody at Trek was thinking deeply about these issues.

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 12:49pm

The need for money is based on the idea of "scarcity" —there are fewer goods, services, resources, etc than there are people that want them. Therefore, money developed as a medium for rationing out these scarce goods. (Not always fairly or rationally, of course, and I hope my Econ 101 professor isn't wincing in pain right now at the simplicity of what I just said. ) "Star Trek" posits a time when technology has made the idea of scarcity obsolete—need to eat, just walk up to a replicator and ask for a meal, need an umbrella, ditto. Anything you need can be made out of apparently unlimited "free" energy and undifferentiated matter for no cost and there is enough for anybody anywhere. (Not physically realistic, I know, which is why it's called "science fiction.") If nothing costs anything, who needs money? Aside from the numerous violations of the thermodynamic laws of the universe, the rest makes sense. If the economic rationale behind it disappears , so will money.

I always thought they needed "credits" for trading outside the federation and that there are a few things, like dilithium, that can't be replicated and must be obtained through domestic resources or from interstellar trade. Also, replicating a bowl gets you a bowl, but the people of the Federation are aesthetic enough to value a homemade bowl as a work of art. So if you're a potter and your friend is a weaver, you can trade a homemade bowl for some hand-woven cloth and so on.

That's what Picard meant when he said the economics of the future are somewhat different.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 1:37pm

Quatloos.

[Reply](#)

- [permazorch](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 3:08pm

Don't date ROBOTS!

[Reply](#)

- [Ever So Clever](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 5:21pm

"And how about that climax?"

That's my number one question to women!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 8:23pm

They mention credits in my favorite line from Catspaw - the Asst. Engineer, trying to break the Enterprise free from whatever has trapped it, says "I'll bet you credits to navy beans we can put a dent in it." I have no idea what the hell that means.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

5/30/09 6:26am

"Wolf in the Fold" was the episode that obsessed me as a kid, because I'd read the Blish novelization and they never seemed to play the episode into the syndication package... It took me years to find it. I was sure it's be so great: Scotty on trial for murder! Jack the Ripper! Psychedelic drinks where each level was a different colour and made you experience a different emotion (apparently Roddenberry or the network but the kibosh on that one- too close to real psychedelics!)... Then... meh.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

5/31/09 1:26am

Of course, if you went back 400 years and had to paid in ecus, how many would you ask?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 10:17am

Catspaw

1) Clear memory from childhood- Catspaw sucked. I'll have to rewatch it to confirm.

2) Rather than ask the question, I looked it up myself- Catspaw first aired on October 27, 1967. I think the reason why I thought it sucked as a kid was because it was so clearly a Halloween Special it through me out of the Star Trek universe (I know, I know, there's a whole lot of illogic to that sentence). Anyway, this episode always bugged me.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 11:05am

Clear memory from watching Catspaw last night - you don't need to rewatch it, barleycorn - it sucks. This one is downright AWFUL. Even the music cues are bad. I'll even go so far as to nominate it for worst episode of the entire series. Spock's Brain and the space hippy episode may be bad, but they're not as bad as this one.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet



5/28/09 11:17am

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Worse than the space hippies? Christ- I'll go home and burn the disk right now.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 11:20am

Note to self:

Beware homonyms, such as "threw" and "through."

Additional note to self:

Commence drinking subsequent to noon.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 11:36am

I should probably re-watch the space hippies episode, but it at least tried to (ineptly) tackle a social issue. Catspaw was just boring and dumb - it's not scary, and it's not fun. Interestingly, it was the first episode filmed for the second season, so maybe you're right and they said "The network wants a Halloween episode? Well, let's slap this together while we get back into the rhythm of making a weekly show. "

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 1:31pm

Shit, I liked Spock's Brain. Both of these episodes suck, though. That Mudd guy just doesn't work for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 2:49pm

One thing that kind of fascinates me is how well they were able to change the aspect ratio in the enhanced version. The spooky castle, for instance, looks a lot more impressive and less hokey on a wider screen.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:03pm

Let's just all utter a collective thanks that Star Trek never embarked on Christmas episode!

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:16pm

I remember some line in "Catspaw" about how the aliens were using conventional telescopes to observe Earth, therefore, the gothic images of horror they were trying to use to intimidate the Enterprise crew were the result of them viewing images of Earth that were hundreds of year old, and the aliens were too stupid to understand how the speed of light works.

Or something.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:34pm

Long range scanners are detecting a small vessel moving at Warp 4.

Analysis, Mr. Spock?

Simple construction. Primarily steel and... wood.  
Any lifeforms detected?  
One humanoid and eight Rangifer tarandus.  
Rangifer...?  
Reindeer, Captain. Eight reindeer.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:44pm

The explanation in Catspaw was that the aliens tried to read the crew's conscious mind and "missed". They read the unconscious mind instead. Apparently, our unconscious minds are preoccupied with fake-looking skeletons, warlocks, and cats.

Trelane in The Squire of Gothos is what you're thinking of, I think.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 4:06pm

Well, I can't speak for you guys, but I know that my unconscious mind looks like the set of a particularly low budget Vincent Price movie. That's why I spend so much time there.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 7:40pm

"They can't be more than a few inches tall each, and they're goddamn absurd."

Yup. I remember telling myself "look - you can see the strings!" And they still creeped me the hell out.

They probably had the choice of Halloween or Christmas episodes. I'm wondering about A Trek Christmas.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 9:20pm

In "Dagger of the Mind", they mention that Kirk and the psychiatrist Helen Noel apparently had some fun during a Christmas party.

A drunken spacebound orgy? A Christmas episode might not have been all that bad.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 9:29pm

The way Kirk operates, you think reading his subconscious mind would have resulted in the episode would have been full of go-go boot-wearing fem-bots.

If it had been me, they would have been Sasha Grey clones.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 10:43am

IN/RE SPACE HIPPIES:

Interview with the lead hippy this week here on AV Club, Mr Charles Napier and a great read it is; He even talks about auditioning for the roll and everything. Check it out, a great read with a really interesting guy, currently to be ween wrestling Ron Jeremy's penis on the big screen....

And yes, Soylent, you're thinking 'Squire of Gothos' where it actually makes a kind of sense and they cat is so obsessed with getting the details right that he'd be just dumb enough to look through a telescope (as foe the real physical contradictions of that... I dunno!)

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 11:33am

I just want to go on record and say almost everything is better then Space: Above and Beyond. That show made so little sense that it hurt to watch. They were Marines, they were pilots, at one point they were driving a tank.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 6:02pm

Ill stand up for Space: Above and Beyond. Perfect? Nope. Entertaining? To me, yep.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 8:17pm

Just for the record - I should probably amend my vote for Catspaw as the worst of the series.

I just rewatched Spock's Brain, which is bad, but not as bad as I remembered it. It's not good, but it's better than Catspaw. I also rewatched the space hippy episode ("The Way to Eden"), and it's pretty damn terrible. Although, if they had ditched the songs (oh, god - the awful, awful songs), which I don't remember being a big part of the show I saw in syndication, at least they have an idea behind the script - where Catspaw has no ideas at all, is dumb from start to finish, and was specifically requested as a Halloween spookfest.

[Reply](#)

- [Morgendorffer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/30/09 4:58pm

My dad tried to get me to watch Space: Above and Beyond around Christmas. God was it weird. I couldn't get past the forced dialogue and the hilarious special effects. Though R. Lee Ermey was in it as a drill sergeant, so I can get behind that.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/30/09 10:23pm

Glad to hear someone else defend Space: Above and Beyond. What I found interesting and at the same time just a bit hokey was the impression I got that it was basically the Second World War in the Pacific transferred to a space setting. Agree with the casting (especially since I've had a fondness for Kristen Cloke since the X-Files) - the acting was good even when the plots were so-so. BSG even kinda stole one of the episode plots for its own episode "Scar". And the final show was excellent.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/31/09 1:24am

I've never heard of this show before this... DO tell!

It's like 'Combat!' but with CGI?

Hmm... (anecdote): I once found a bunch of old TV kinescopes (before they had video, they literally filmed the screen to save stuff) and series at a garage sale for a guy who'd edited for ABC and NBC back in the day. It included a couple of 'Combat!'s, some 'Shindig's (both reminding me of my ex-wife!) as well as publicity and variety shows. It was in

pretty dire shape, but I cleaned it up and sold it for a pretty penny... I'm told that one of the 'Combat!'s was the original and only copy...

Sadly, I also found the original acetate of the first recording by Frank Zappa. My friend, who was with me at the time, had heard Zappa talking on the radio about how it was the only one of his recordings he didn't have and how much he regretted it. I sent it to him with a letter saying what a big fan I was and how pleased I was to be able to get this to him. I admit I was hoping for a reward (I could have sold the thing, after all), a 'Good boy! Thanx!' or even an autograph or something, but I got much, much more...

First a certified letter warning me that if I'd made a recording I faced prosecution and that if any copies showed up I'd be the presumed source. Miffed, I didn't respond, which got me a visit from an attorney... I can't really listen to Zappa anymore...

(sorry for that digression... obviously I had to get this off my chest in the most appropriate venue possible, a Trek chat!)

Frank Zappa= Space Hippy (better?)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 10:57am

Wha Wha Wha Wha?

Star Trek a day early? Yay!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 11:15am

Dumbledore-

Star Trek has moved to Thursday for the summer. This is common knowledge, and I regret that you failed to receive the memo.

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 11:16am

Apparently the TV Club schedule was changed.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 1:33pm

That kinda sucks, Star Trek reviews were my preferred Friday time waster. Looks like I picked the wrong week to quit sniffing glue.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 1:49pm

Well, now its your Thursday time waster.

Get with the program!

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 2:27pm

You're not the boss of me!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 2:39pm

No, but I am your boss's boss, and he's on the way down to your cubicle with an empty cardboard box for your name plate, successories calendar, Dogbert stress toy and drinking bird.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 2:48pm

Sorry chief, you got the wrong guy! I haven't had to work in a cube in years. I'm currently churning out ad copy in a large, comfortable office that overlooks a gorgeous panoramic view of rolling Southern California hills and strawberry fields. I wouldn't mind having one of those drinking birds though.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 2:55pm

I got, like, a 5 pack from China 10 years ago and they look just like Homer's. Type "drinking bird" into Amazon and they're all over.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 3:13pm

We should start a nationwide letter campaign to get it moved back to Friday.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 3:20pm

You could just show up a day late and post to yourself.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 7:32pm

The deal on the move to Friday: it's just easier for everyone involved to move the schedule around. For your TGIF pleasure, you're gonna have Noel's Buffy recaps to enjoy, which is pretty sweet, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/28/09 8:59pm

Didn't Star Trek run on Thursdays? It was after Tarzan with Ron Elly. I saw a lot of reruns at 4:30 in the afternoon along with Gillian's Island. Anyway, Thursdays seems to be the correct time for the reviews.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 10:28am

Man, it was certainly on on Thursdays with Gilligan's Island in Denver, Colorado, I can tell you that!

I used to get into huge fights over what we'd watch with my brother,an inexcusable Gilligan fan. My mother tried to be fair: He could watch Gilligan's island for the half hour it was on, then I could watch the half hour end of Star Trek. It drove me mad as they refused to acknowledge that I got half a show and he got all of his! They even refused my offer to let him watch his two days if only I could have a whole Trek every three days!

Bastards! Let them screw my DVDs!

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 11:53am

you guys could also just wait till Friday to read this. Then its like nothing changed

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

5/29/09 5:14pm

Tomorrow is Yesterday!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 10:21am

Mudd

Is it just me or could ST IV-era Jimmy Doohan do a spot on Mudd impression with only the addition of a ridiculous handlebar moustache?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 11:22am

Never had the thought, but I can see the resemblance.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 12:11pm

Mudd's robot wife really freaked my shit out when I was a kid. Why would any sane man build that?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 12:13pm

Um, sex?

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 12:26pm

Um, with that? Um, no.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 1:49pm

@MPBC - because he wanted to get the last word in, which he never could at home. He explains it clearly to Kirk, Spock and McCoy - well, clearly as any man with that kind of twisted motivation COULD. You two don't get on? Just get a divorce so you can both get on with your lives!

It is part of the reason ST:TOS dates so badly - hilarious as the episode is (and the first two Mudd episodes ARE funny, with Carmel just menacing enough to be interesting), the attitudes are so clearly "Sixties mainstream television" that they leave a slightly sour taste in your mouth. So it's so vital in The Twenty-Third Century to these plain-jane women To Get a Husband that they'll take pills to make them temporarily beautiful, and marry a group of miners they don't even know out in the middle of nowhere? Or for the rascally Harry Mudd to abandon his shrewish wife - without any nod at what might have made her that way with him, or why they got married in the first place? Or how, no matter what

the situation, it's always Jimbo Kirk who Saves the Day - never mind that the "furriner" Spock is much smarter and stronger than him?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 2:16pm

@ Dr. Darkeny: Very good point, and what you have to also remember is that in 40 years the same will be said for TNG, DS9, Voyager, and Enterprise.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 2:42pm

Women are bad drivers, too.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:04pm

"Women are bad drivers, too. "

Hah! So true! And they get grouchy once a month!

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 3:47pm

Once a month? Fuck that, I'm grouchy every day. Oppressive patriarchy and all that crap.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 4:03pm

Plus I hear that their menstration attracts bears.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 4:25pm

Boy, Dumbledore, you really take the "you" out of menstruation!

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/28/09 5:36pm

drdarkeny:

"It is part of the reason ST:TOS dates so badly"

No, it's part of the reason TOS dates so ENJOYABLY. Some people just don't look at things from the right perspective.

(TNG actually suffers from it's datedness more, due to having absolutely zero campy grooviness. I used to have this routine of winding a friend up by insisting that TNG and LA Law were exactly the same show. I was only half joking.)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 10:36am

Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren' there just the two Mudd eps?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

5/29/09 1:41pm

The Trouble with Tribble episode features a character similar to Mudd, named Cyrano Jones.

[Reply](#)

- [WadeTheHutt](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/07/09 11:36am

I always liked that Star Trek humans, as compared to other races, are weak, stupid, and have inferior technology. But, we have better captains, and that's what counts.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Bob K](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 11:43am

Would you put your brain in a robot body?

Not just a powerful and appealing robot body, but an Adirenne Barbeaubot with the strength of five gorillas!

(And a Romulan on DS9)

[Reply](#)

- [Screaming Yellow Zonker Harris](#)Bob K

5/28/09 12:28pm

Bob, I think this idea is worth applying for a federal research grant. The military would love an army of Barbeaubots. What nation could withstand them?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Bob K

5/28/09 2:26pm

We'll have chainsaws for arms and eat tires like licorice!

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Bob K

5/28/09 3:25pm

No android body for me unless they can replicate my massive dong... and give me the same sensations that I get now when I use it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bob K

5/28/09 4:26pm

I'm just a humble android with a big ass dick.

[Reply](#)

- [S. Jerusalem](#)Bob K

5/28/09 7:17pm

Hesh wants to be a tiger-bot!

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)Bob K

5/28/09 9:00pm

No prob, Soylent. They can simply give you proportionally massive hands.

[Reply](#)



- [Soylent Green](#)Bob K

5/28/09 9:30pm

Zing!

[Reply](#)

- [Anywhere I lay my head](#)Bob K

5/29/09 12:16am

I am a replicant.

I just saw Mudd's Women and the blonde that broke off from the group for Kirk was really hot.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 10:59am

"Very bad poetry, Captain."

I loved this moment with Spock as it kind of shows his amusement with the whole silly universe.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MovieMike

5/29/09 5:14pm

Ironic, in that his name so readily lends itself to rhymes...

C'mon, join me!

"There once was a man named Spock,  
Who's..."

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)MovieMike

5/29/09 7:35pm

Chevrolet wouldn't unlock?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MovieMike

5/30/09 6:08am

Wife was made out of chalk...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MovieMike

5/31/09 1:13am

When I was in high school ("Tell us, Grampa!") after "Wrath of Khan" we palyed this games saying:

"If Spock came back as a timepiece he'd be called..."

"Clock!"

"And if he came back as an athlete..."

Amazingly I did have friends...

Yes, I did!

I did so!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)MovieMike

5/31/09 2:52am

We KNOW you did, Richelieu ...

(aside) Quick, get the ritalin...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)MovieMike

6/01/09 12:50pm

There once was a Vulcan names Spock

Whose pinch could knock you out like a Glock

His blood it ran green

Lending a curious sheen

And a coppery hue to his

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Hipster D Bag](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 4:47pm

Bewildered

I feel like I could stare at that picture all day, and still have no idea what was going on. Despite the poor review, I actually want to watch this episode, just to break the cognitive dissonance of what I'm looking at right now. Shrimp wearing fur coats? Octopus face Lovecraftian Elder gods? Zuh?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Hipster D Bag](#)Hipster D Bag

5/29/09 12:23am

Joost here I come!

[Reply](#)

- [Hipster D Bag](#)Hipster D Bag

5/29/09 4:12am

I'm back. Let us never speak of this again.

[Reply](#)

- [Hipster D Bag](#)Hipster D Bag

5/29/09 4:13am

I will say that Jackson's faceplant in the first scene looks like it took some commitment.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Hipster D Bag

5/29/09 10:13am

Jeez, wait until you see them twittering about with the smoke and the sound... Simultaneously the crappiest, cheapest and yet the most amazing thing I may have ever seen on network TV!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

5/29/09 10:00am

Wired Aliens!

Oh man, I am so glad you used that image for this review! Those little cocktail-toothpick cum feathered-shrimp doodads have been engraved on my memory since I was about six years old! I agree that in some ways, they are the

most alien of ST TOS aliens, and that weird, twitchy sped-up movement and sound, it's almost like they're on the verge of falling down and pissed about it!

I remember the little, squeaky old tourists in Mulholland Drive reminding me of them for some reason...

Anyone know if they spruced these fellows up on the 'new-and-improved episodes'?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

5/29/09 10:47am

Oops! This is discussed below... I do wonder if I saw these aliens hanging from a girl's ears in a bar in the 80's....

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

5/29/09 9:10pm

I like the Catspaw-Mulholland Drive linkage there!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

5/31/09 1:09am

I'm increasingly convinced it was intentional...

I hold the key to it all, the triangular, blue key... to... it... all...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

5/31/09 10:44am

Silencio!

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 8:17pm

Does anybody know?

Is the cat-lady in Catspaw the same one from the Khan/Eugenics Wars books? The Whole Gary Seven thing? I only read one, and my Trek nerd-ness is not what it needs to be, so I was wondrin' if anybody knew. The concept sounds awful familiar.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)a Nick

5/28/09 8:39pm

I understand your question completely and I think the answer is no, there is no connection.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)a Nick

5/28/09 10:28pm

I'm glad someone brought up Gary Seven, because I was about to point out that Sylvia is definitely only the second hottest woman who can turn into a cat on this season of Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)a Nick

5/29/09 1:28pm

Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpesa](#) Nick

5/29/09 1:48pm

I read that book, where Gary Seven and Roberta Lincoln are old. There was something not quite right about it, though, and I wasn't enthralled enough to continue reading the other books in the Eugenics Wars series.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen

5/31/09 3:24am

Of Gods and Men

Sorry to get a bit off-subject here, and especially once those of you with lives have moved on to other threads, but has anyone seen these fan-films? I've seen the first of 'Of Gods and Men' with Koenig, N Nichols et al and directed by Tim Russ... It's far from a masterpiece, but far from totally without interest either..

Any thoughts? I know this isn't the right place, but I have the impression to know some of you slightly and I'd be interested in your opinions... If there's another message-board, I'd gladly go there, though I fear my life-long ST fandom pales in respect to that of 'true' Trekkers...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Richelieu Jr

6/01/09 12:51pm

I'm still pathetically reading this thread, but I haven't seen the fanficfilms.

[Reply](#)

- [i and i](#) Richelieu Jr

6/02/09 12:45pm

the only one that i liked (and i didn't get to see the one you mention) was Starship Exeter. It definitely succeeded in getting that original Trek look (it was like watching the Menagerie, production-wise). Even the captain's hair looked like a 60's cut. Petty good job on an Andorean's make-up, great location, lighting, etc. Good acting. I only saw the first part though, less than 15 minutes, maybe less than ten... I didn't have regular internet access, had a lot of stuff to hunt for when I went online, so I ended up not checking out more of Exeter.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Richelieu Jr

6/04/09 1:35am

I admit I only saw the first part of this one as well, but the work was quite good, overall, and they certainly spared no effort...

[Reply](#)

- [frogman](#) Zack Handlen

5/28/09 10:24am

Spooky Not Scary

I enjoy 'spooky' but I loathe horror flicks. I have to admit, I always found the weird theme world thing of TOS incredibly entertaining..say man ships off to colonize planets, you KNOW it's gonna be the crazies first. (like the pilgrims).. so America would've been pilgrim planet for awhile at least..

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#) frogman

5/28/09 11:00am

That is also why I love Universal and Hammer Horror movies. Not scary at all, but spooky and fun as all get out.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)frogman

5/28/09 7:47pm

I'd like to have an official ruling on what times of year it is appropriate to listen to "The Monster Mash." I've always thought February through November was OK, but many other folks seem to disagree.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)frogman

5/29/09 10:34am

'R' as in 'Grrraveyarrd Smash!'

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 9:32pm

Robotic Uhura

Correct me if I wrong, I know you will, But wasn't Uhura only pretending to want a robotic body as part of Kirk's plot to foil the androids? She was always as dedicated to the Enterprise as the Captain.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Kapow

5/28/09 10:01pm

Sure, her "betrayal" was a ruse, but she's definitely into the idea of staying pretty forever.

[Reply](#)

- [Jehovah](#)Kapow

5/29/09 1:03pm

I'M into the idea of staying pretty forever. And I'm a guy. And not pretty to start with.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Kapow

5/29/09 1:11pm

Hmm... maybe she got a robot body after all?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 11:39am

halloween episode

So, was Catspaw originally broadcast around Halloween?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)alurin

5/28/09 11:43am

Scroll down, my friend.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)alurin

5/28/09 8:58pm

Or, you know, the Google.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)alurin

5/29/09 1:09pm

Unfortunately, those of us over 35 are banned from using The Google.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 9:05am

Damn these pizza-esque typing limbs....

Long LIST of to-dos

[Reply](#)

- [justpassingby](#)The Pizza Monster

5/28/09 10:10am

That picture is sooo BLUE!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

5/29/09 9:37am

Spock is getting a little fresh with me, yes. And I didn't tell him to stop.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 9:50pm

FUN FACT

Tribbles' writer David Gerrold allegedly did an uncredited re-write on "I, Mudd". Love how Zack hit on the genuinely weird twists the story takes — it's almost ST as Sartre (all right, that's pushing it).

There's a lot of talk about including other original series elements and characters in the next Abrams TREK and Abrams pal, Greg Grunberg from Alias and Heroes has joked he'd like to play the reimagined Harry Mudd. A good choice, I think but I'm sure there are others.. Maybe Russell Crowe can pack on the pounds again!

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Captain Jamuary

5/28/09 11:11pm

I always hoped he'd pop up one of the original cast's films, maybe in III when Bones was in the bar trying to hire an illegal space flight to Genesis.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 11:44am

remake

Anyone else want to see a remake of "I, Mudd" with Grace Park, Tricia Helfer, and Lucy Lawless as the androids and Dean Stockwell as Norman?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)alurin

5/28/09 12:01pm

With Kate Vernon as Stella.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen

5/30/09 8:43pm

Okay, I'll let it go after this, but...

... no way in hell is "I. Mudd"—fun as it is—a better episode than "The Menagerie" or "Where No Man Has Gone Before."

No way.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [sputnik7](#)Zack Handlen

9/16/11 10:53pm

A better title for Harry Mudd's sophomore appearance on TOS could have been "My Name Is Mudd" (cue Les Claypool bassline).

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/06/16 12:22am

I posted those ridiculous blue shrimp on my Facebook page a couple of months ago.

[Reply](#)

- [anotherpaceboy](#)Zack Handlen

5/28/09 1:34pm

fix

the typos.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Metamorphosis" / "Journey To Babel"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published June 11, 2009

[Comments \(144\)](#)



While the Enterprise's basic "search and explore" mission provides a lot of open ground for the writers, it does get a bit old to start each new episode with Kirk and the others taking readings off a brand new planet, right before the situation goes pear shaped. I'm not sure if that's the reason why "Metamorphosis" opens the way it does, with Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and a woman named Hedford in the Galileo shuttle-craft on their way home, but it's as good a reason as any. We don't even see the Enterprise until a good twenty minutes in, which gives the proceedings a certain unmoored quality; as though Kirk and his two best buds decided to play hooky for the week, and we get to tag along.

But the whole point of playing hooky is having fun, and with Hedford around, there's precious little chance of that happening. Another in a long line of pissy Starfleet officers, our miss is an assistant commissioner forced to leave her post due to health problems; she'd been brokering a peace treaty, so it's understandable that she'd be frustrated, but what isn't understandable is the way she takes that frustration out on anything that has the temerity to show concern or even moderate interest in her well-being. Kirk is charged with bringing her back to the Enterprise for treatment (stray thought: I wondered why the Enterprise didn't just come pick Hedford up itself, given how much time is of the essence here, but maybe those warring factions that Hedford is working to calm down wouldn't be too happy to see a big ass symbol of Starfleet authority show up in the middle of their war), and she's making him pay for every minute of it. It's one of the episode's weak spots; the show's never been much for strong women, and to have one of the few prominent career gals we see behave like the stereotypical cold shrew (a key plot point is that she's never had real love in her life) is distracting and tedious.

Thankfully, a space anomaly shows up to snatch the Galileo before things get too unpleasant. While Hedford continues to gripe (with McCoy joining in; the idiots don't seem to realize that when a sparkling cloud grabs you, you don't really have many options), the anomaly brings the shuttlecraft to one of those "wow, the atmosphere here is just like Earth's!" planets. I love how they make a point of mentioning this every once in a while; given that nobody ever wears a space suit on this series, isn't *every* planet Earth appropriate?

On this new, pink and purple world, the shuttle-craft lands, and won't rise again. McCoy finds signs that the space cloud



has followed them to the planet's surface, but before anybody can work out what's going on, a man appears on the horizon. He calls himself Cochrane, and he's just delighted to meet everybody. He's especially delighted to meet Hedford, which he makes sure to point out to her numerous times in a creepy, "I'm going to refer to you as if you couldn't understand what I'm saying" way, like he's praising a horse to its owners. (Hedford's reactions are pretty hilarious; it's not quite outrage so much as a fifty year-old schoolmarm getting repeatedly goosed.) He's also impressed with their ship, although he assures them it won't get running again—some kind of damping field on the planet surface keeps engines down.

Everybody hikes to Cochrane's place. He tells them he crash-landed a while back, but he underplays just how long ago that "while" was, and that's not his only secret. While Hedford collapses in the living room (not before getting a few choice remarks out beforehand, of course), Kirk and McCoy try to remember where they've seen Cochrane before. Then the space cloud shows up to float around the edge of the garden outside, and Kirk finally demands Cochrane spill the whole truth. His first name is Zefram, and he's known to Kirk and the others for inventing warp drive. And he disappeared 150 years ago.

One of the things I enjoyed most about "Metamorphosis" is that it gives a few more pieces of Starfleet history. I'm not sure I'd call myself a hardcore continuity geek (you have to wear leather and read tech manuals for that), but I appreciate world-building as much as the next guy, and while I doubt anyone at the time thought that Cochrane's name would ever come up again, it's cool to have a sense of history here. What's unfortunate is that that history is only a means to an end. Zefram invented warp drive so that he would be famous enough for Kirk and the others to be shocked he was still alive. Apart from some cursory interest in the Galileo's design, his engineering work is meaningless, as is his fame; his love of travel drove him into space in his old age, where the space cloud (aka the Companion) found him and made him young, but in the 150 years since then, he's been a lump.

Hell, he's as boring as any other random jerk we've run into on the show. I realize we can't have him gibbering and bathing in his own filth, but surely some concession could've been made to the century and a half the guy spent in exile. When Zefram spills the beans to Kirk, he explains how he communes with the Companion, and that it's peaceful, so maybe some of the horrors of all that time separated from human contact were mitigated by those sessions. But still, that's a long time to just sit around and not die.

And it's certainly not a history that Kirk is willing to repeat. After explaining the nature of his relationship with the Companion (a relationship he himself doesn't really understand), Zefram gives the bad news: Kirk and the others were brought to the planet to be Zefram's buddies. That it took 150 years for this to happen seems a stretch (unless there are more things buried under the sand than plastic rocks—maybe Zefram doesn't play well with others), but stretch or not, our heroes are stuck. If they want to get off the rock, they're going to need to find a way past yet another god-entity. And this one won't even do Kirk the courtesy of having a corporeal form to punch.

Apart from the introduction of the man who gave us warp drive, "Metamorphosis" has a wonky enough vibe to stay fairly interesting through out. The two scenes back on the Enterprise are essentially pointless, but other than that, the script doesn't waste much time. We get one failed attempt to "short out" the Companion, which goes badly; after that, it's just a matter of realizing just why the space cloud who just happens to have a female voice on the Universal Translator swiped a hunk of man meat out of the cosmos to be her forever friend. Love comes in many sizes, y'know? And hardly any of them make sense.

Here's where things go off the rails for me, as Zefram is revealed to be a lunkhead *and* an ass. When Kirk breaks the news that the Companion is his sort-of lover, Cochrane wigs out, and calls the whole relationship "disgusting." I can understand him being unnerved, but the bizarre attempt to apply conventional morality to the situation falls utterly flat; he even busts out the "Maybe this kind of thing is okay in *your* neck of the universe" speech. Thankfully McCoy and Spock are more reasonable about it, so we get the usual *Trek* nod to tolerance and respect. But that's undercut by the fact that Zefram doesn't back down until the Companion merges with the near-death Hedford. It's only when the alien has a human form—a form that Zefram has admired earlier—that he starts to appreciate all that's been done for him. Basically, it's only when he gets everything he wants that he stops sulking.

Ever read *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein? It's about a tree that loves a boy, and how that tree gives its shade, its fruit, and ultimately its body to keep the boy happy. I knew someone years ago how absolutely despised the book—said it was all about a woman who sacrifices everything she has without getting anything in return—and while I didn't agree with her at the time, there's something about "Metamorphosis" that reminds me of that story. The lesson here is subtle, and you can argue I'm reading too much in, but notice how the Companion is stereotypically "feminine," nurturing, sacrificing, to the point where she is willing to give up immortality in order to make her man happy. And notice how Hedford, snipey twerp that she is, confesses in her final moments as a single entity that she regrets never knowing love. As though the whole peace treaty wasn't nearly as important as hooking up and making babies. (Kirk even dismisses the importance of Hedford to the treaty in the episode's last line; you have to wonder what kind of story he's going to tell Starfleet to explain losing one of its officers during critical negotiations.)

It's enough to take some of the fun out of a reasonably entertaining storyline. As things end, the Companion merges with Hedford's body, Zefram finally sees the error of his ways, and since the new Hedford can't leave the planet without dying, he decides to stay where he is, because hey, he's got something he can actually fuck now. Kirk and the others, having seen the beauty of true whatchamacallit, leave with strict orders to never tell another living soul what happened. Why? I dunno. That's just how things get done. And as always, we're left with questions. Like, we only have the new Hedford's word that the merging was a peaceful process—which is kind of creepy, isn't it? And how long are the newlyweds going to stay happy once Zefram realizes that the Companion sacrificed her powers to become physical? Better hope that the planet's 72 degree atmosphere is a naturally occurring phenomenon...

"Journey to Babel" moves away from high concept to settle into what was always my least favorite kind of episode growing up: old-fashioned melodrama. There are sci-fi trappings, of course—we're still in a space ship after all—but instead of focusing its attentions on some new world or scary alien, "Babel" gives us feelings and people and relationships and stuff. This just seemed like a waste of potential to my ten year-old self. In my defense, I was watching a lot of *Next Generation* at the time. A lot of the "we're transporting aliens to such and such, and it's tense" episodes on that series were really, really dull.

"Babel" is definitely not dull. It's sappy and at times muddled, but since this is the original series, even the so-called emotionless characters are on edge. And hey, if the introduction of Zefram Cochrane in "Metamorphosis" thrilled you, we get a far more important player here: Spock's father, Sarek, played by Mark Lenard (last seen here as a Romulan Commander in "Balance of Terror") and Spock mom, Amanda, not being played by Winona Ryder. (It's Jane Wyatt, Miss Jane Wyatt if you're nasty.) The Enterprise has been charged with transporting a gaggle of ambassadors to an important Federation council meeting, and Sarek is one of those ambassadors. Funny how Spock never bothered to mention that to Kirk until just before the opening titles, huh?

One of the original *Trek's* greatest strengths is Leonard Nimoy as Spock; one of its greatest weaknesses is its shaky (at best) grasp on the concept of logic. Much the way that Jedi Knights turned from bad-asses with laser swords into muddled, contradictory cultists when Lucas tried to explain their culture in the prequels, the more we see of how Vulcan's put their philosophy into practice, the more Spock's rationality seems like some kind of fluke. That worked to great purpose in "Amok Time," which gave us a society whose rigid self-control rests as much on arcane ritual as it does on stoicism, but here, the basic message is, "Those wacky Vulcans are just like humans at heart, if only they'd realize it!" (Okay, maybe "heart" is a poor word choice in this case, given McCoy's struggles to keep Sarek's still beating.) After the freaky abstraction of "Amok," "Babel" just gives us *The Jazz Singer* in space.

Thankfully, Lenard is as up to the task as Nimoy. Sarek is basically just a cooler variation on the Romulan from "Balance," but the chemistry between him and Spock is sound. Jane Wyatt, not so much, although it's hard to know how much of that is the writer's fault; Amanda initially seems as smart and strong as her husband, but as the episode progresses, she turns into the same emotionally spastic, intellectually over-matched woman we get all the freakin' time on the series. Only she's slightly maternal as well. A marriage between a human and a Vulcan is, as far as we can tell, an incredibly rare thing. You'd expect Amanda to be a singular person, and the connection between her and Sarek to be something more complicated than "He's repressed! She's in touch with her heart!" But it doesn't seem to be.

Buried in amidst all this (incredibly predictable) family drama is something sort of resembling a plot. A pig-headed

(literally—and good lord, the DVD is not kind to the mask here) ambassador named Gav is found dead on ship, his neck broken in a manner similar to certain Vulcan practices of old. Gav and Sarek were seen fighting earlier, so he falls under suspicion. It's a development that seems to come more out of dramatic necessity than anything anyone actually believes. Not even Spock's "My dad could totally kill a guy" conversation with Kirk is very convincing. When the boys go to confront Sarek, he collapses; and McCoy, after his usual grumblings about Vulcan anatomy (seriously, you'd think the Vulcans would've provided biological information to the Federation; it's not like they don't have science where Spock is from), explains that Sarek's heart is mucked up, and he needs an operation.

Now, you may have initially thought that "Babel" was about the dead ambassador; and when Sarek drops to the floor, you might reasonably have assumed that this was connected to the earlier killing in some way. Perhaps whoever killed Gav is planning on bumping off others? This would be an incorrect assumption on your part. Sarek's health problems now take center stage, because he needs a lot of Vulcan blood if he's going to have that operation, and Spock is the only person who can provide it. Maybe this will give them a chance to patch up the 18 year long silence between them?

So *that's* what the episode is about—Spock and Sarek getting chummy again. There's a lot of back and forth about the operation; it's dangerous for Spock, he'll need to produce a lot of blood for Sarek to survive, Amanda doesn't want Spock to risk his life, and so on. Just when you thought the whole dead-pig-guy thread got dropped, we come back from commercial break to find Kirk fighting against a blue skinned Andorian (who may not be what he appears to be). Kirk gets stabbed, the Andorian goes to the brig, and now we have a new complication; there's still some kind of conspiracy going on (which probably has something to do with the unidentified vessel that's trailing the Enterprise), and now Spock has to take command while Kirk recovers from his injuries. Given the situation, Spock refuses to step down and let someone else take charge, even if that means delaying his dad's operation and costing Sarek his life. (Oddly enough, now Amanda is bitching Spock out for *not* agreeing to the surgery.)

Simultaneous plotlines are nothing new for the series, but "Babel" is all over the place. The conspiracy plot keeps getting dropped to the side, and while the pay-off—a tense confrontation between the Enterprise and the ship that's been stalking them—is solid, it seems to come from another episode entirely. I wanted more diplomacy, more discussion about what was at stake beyond a handful of rapid lines thrown out more as justification than storytelling. The Sarek/Spock stuff has its moments, but there's an awful lot of cliché here; the most interesting twist is Spock's commitment to duty, and how it doesn't really seem like a bad thing, no matter how hard his mother might hit him. It falls to Kirk to fake recovery long enough to get Spock to relinquish command, but even that plan is just much an excuse for Kirk to get back into the action as anything else. In the end, everybody winds up happy. Sarek survives, he and Spock share a quip, and the conspirators, who turn out to be raiders trying to play both sides against the other, all die. One of them even poisons himself; it's slow-acting poison, which seems a poor choice for a spy ("Ha-ha! You may have captured me, but I'm going to die... eventually... so you'll have no time to get information out of me! Not unless you act fast!"), but he's dead regardless.

"Babel" is an important episode in *Trek* because of the introduction of Spock's parents. On its own, it's fun, provided you don't mind the disjointedness. It's nice to see the Enterprise working a different job, and one that implies a larger system than we ever see. It's just frustrating that the politics are largely tossed aside in favor of overheated soap opera. Spock's half-human, half-vulcan heritage has a lot of potential for character drama, and that potential is briefly explored here; but while Nimoy turns in his usual strong work, and Lenard provides able assistance, I'm just not feeling it. But hey, sometimes you just have to enjoy the episode you get, instead of pining for the one that might have been.

#### **Grades:**

**"Metamorphosis": B**

**"Journey To Babel": B**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- There's a lovely moment in "Metamorphosis" when the Companion, in Hedford's body, lifts up her scarf so she can see Zefram through it; it's like she's remembering how he looked when she embraced him as a multi-colored cloud.

- For those not up on their *Trek*-lore, Zefram Cochrane is a main character in the only *Next Generation* movie worth a damn, *First Contact*.
- Looks like the writers on the new *Star Trek* movie watching "Journey to Babel" at some point—in addition to a reference to Spock having a troubled youth, the final bit of dialogue between Spock and Sarek ("Why did you marry her?" "At the time, it seemed like the logical thing to do.") sounds very familiar.
- Up next, "Friday's Child" and "The Deadly Years."

## DISCUSSION

- Community (143)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:15am

That pig make up

Is cheap, my god man, it's just a man in a poorly made mask.

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 10:44am

Ever heard of spirit gum? Even around the eyes, spirit gum will fix that.

[Reply](#)

- [justpassingby](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 10:44am

Can that actor even see out of it?

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 10:50am

He's not really a pig-man, just a fat little mental patient.

[Reply](#)

- [Chocolate Eating Jacket](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 11:35am

No, no that can't be an actual character, the image must have come from the famed April fool's episode when Kirk beamed up wearing a pig's mask as a goof.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 1:18pm

They got the makeup down in the "Enterprise" series. And the Andorians were great in the show too - their antennae moved around constantly.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 1:59pm

One thing I wished Enterprise had done was revisit more of TOS alien worlds and characters and give them a spit shine, like they did for the Tellarites and Andorians, rather than fall back on a few TNG species, such as the Borg and Ferengi.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 1:59pm

Agree with meyer. If there was anything worth watching in "Enterprise," it was watching how the make-up team managed to update the alien species from the original show to something somewhat less cheap-looking.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 2:11pm

Showing the Tholians was pretty kickass too.

I know they've tried to explain this in various eps exactly why there are so many "humanoid" type species all over the planet, with little more than cosmetic differences to the basic four limbs with digits and a head formula. Worst offenders: the subtle and tastefully placed leopard spots for the Trill and the "I look human but can read your mind" Betazoids.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 2:12pm

\*all over the galaxy not planet, that is.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 2:17pm

Sometimes. Other times, like with the Gorn, they just did a cheap CGI job on them, which wasn't really an improvement.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 2:26pm

@Random Letter - The forehead bumps got pretty ridiculous, that's for sure. They even gave 'em to the Romulans. I've always suspected that Rick Berman had some kind of weird forehead fetish.

@Herpes - The Gorn should have been the old-fashioned guy in a suit. Those two Mirror Universe eps in "Enterprise" were kick-ass until they decided halfway through to ditch the story and just throw in everything from the original series they could think of.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 3:23pm

@Tinsel: actually, the Betazeds are the way to go. Most of the planets in TOS are populated by 100% human-looking humanoids, and nobody cares. I say either go all the way and give us alien-looking aliens, or stick to humans with funny names. It's the in-between solutions (Trill, Bajorans, etc.) that are aggravating.

For some reason, this rule does not apply to Vulcans.

@Meyer: I did love the meticulous reconstruction of the TOS sets in the Enterprise mirror episodes.

Why was there never a TNG mirror universe episode?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 3:26pm

There were TNG mirror universe novels. Not the greatest.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 4:29pm

My experience is that Star Trek novels fail as toilet paper, much less as novels.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 4:44pm

Alurin-

Hard to disagree, even though I read them in the same way that some people watch Judge Judy- we know its crap but can't help ourselves.

If you're game, however, I recommend reading "Federation." It stars, in part, Zefram Cochran (who I always pictured as James Cromwell). Anyway, it really was quite a decent read off a mountain of crap.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 4:54pm

Berman had a near-obsession with avoiding TOS tie-ins, with very few exceptions\* after the disastrous first season attempts like "Naked Now."

It was only shows he had less direct control over, like DS9 under Behr and Moore (Mirror universe) or ENT after Coto took over that this was relaxed at all.

\*Like when TOS people like Nimoy & Doohan agreed to to guest spots.

Also, Random Letter makes an excellent, excellent point.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 5:17pm

@JBMD: Thanks for the recommendation.

@edked: Do we have any idea WHY Berman was so eager to avoid TOS tie-ins?

@Random Letter: Will humankind be wiped out because we tried to pull the mask off the alien envoy?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/11/09 5:30pm

I'm guessing Bergman didn't like the tie-ins because they were sequels in the worst way: new Enterprise encounters same person/phenomenon/planet/race as old Enterprise, similar action ensues, similar resolution follows. For a series already so tied to certain storytelling conventions, I'm guessing he thought it would dumb it down. Of course, he produced "Nemesis" so I'm not entirely convinced of his intellectual purity.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 6:58am

@ ALURIN: Have you tried to watch 'The Naked Now' recently? It put me off TNG for years, and I'm not exaggerating.. After that he probably figured TOS stuff was kryptonite; I would've...

[Reply](#)

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 9:33am

But doesn't Yar get all sexy with Data, who basically tells her he's got a big android dick with her name on it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 10:26am

@Rich, JBMD: I suppose it depends what a tie-in would mean. If it's something like "The Naked Now", and I can see how a mirror-TNG episode might turn out like that, then certainly they should be avoided. But TNG could have featured more connections to the original series (Andorians, anyone?), a la Right Windnuit, as opposed to just makin' up new shit that isn't as interesting (Binars, anyone? Ferenghi?).

@D: This is the second time in as many weeks that the phrase "I'm just a humble android with a big-ass dick" has been apropos. Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [much more cleverer than the po](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 5:24pm

I have to vehemently disagree about the Star Trek novels. I believe they make outstanding toilet paper. Especially the early ones.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 5:32pm

One of the things I didn't like about JJ Trek was that the Romulans didn't seem anything like Romulans. Certainly, not anything like Mark Lenard Romulans. In that instance I wish they had NOT gone with the tie-in and just said they were the "Jeffersons" or something.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 5:47pm

@much more cleverer... : I will concede that "Spock Must Die!" is excellent toilet paper.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/12/09 11:32pm

It turns out the secret is to tear the covers off! It only I'd known! D'oh!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/13/09 12:32am

"Spock, Messiah!" makes great toilet paper AND a good substitute for a Gideon New Testament—in that order.

[Reply](#)

- [steph5555](#)D-The One Lettered Man

6/16/09 2:51pm

Foolproof TNG novel reading guide:

Question 1: Is the novel written by Peter David?

If the answer is no, don't bother.

There is no question two.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:55am

James Cromwell as Zefram Cochrane

Agreed, First Contact was the best of the execrable Next Gen films.

And James Cromwell was the best part of First Contact.

My favorite James Cromwell quote, from Revenge of the Nerds (he was Louis' father who drives them to college):  
"Got the ol' cruise control set at 35!"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 10:57am

Cromwell was at his peak in LA Confidential.

I didn't much care for First Contact. Perhaps it was the rock music. The whole thing smacked of Jonathan Frakes being smug.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 11:02am

Cromwell was great in First Contact. "Don't you people have bathrooms in the future?" Not that we have seen any.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 1:19pm

I liked Cromwell in The Queen. One of the rare times that an American was convincingly British.

But, yeah, First Contact was not only the best TNG movie, but either the #1 or #2 best Trek movie ever. One of the rare times they didn't feel like longer episodes that you had to pay to see. I just don't really think that Trek plays well in the films—as blogger Matt Yglesias says: "A quintessential Trek scene, from any of the series, consists of a bunch of people standing around on the bridge of a starship (or DS9 equivalent) talking to one another, followed by a cutaway to a shot of a ship in space, followed by a return to the standing around talking. It's just not something that particularly requires the big screen."

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 1:22pm

Agreed on Cromwell being great in First Contact. First Contact is a fine movie as long as Cromwell or Stewart are on screen. One of the many problems with the TNG movies is that they tried to be ensemble films, but the ensemble was weak.

Cromwell is also good on West Wing as an ex-president more or less corresponding to Jimmy Carter.

And, yes, he's awesome in LA Confidential, and the rock music in First Contact sucked.

[Reply](#)

- [Cajun Clearwater](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 1:29pm

Jonathan Frakes being smug can be fun to watch. If you've seen The Librarian movies (Frakes directed two of them) on cable, they wink at the audience a lot, but they're much better made than your average Giant Shark vs. Avenging Mutant Seal movie on the Sigh-Fi Channel.

[Reply](#)

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you



6/11/09 2:18pm

IMO, the best TNG movie was the last episode. "All Good Things ..." was awesome; not too far behind was "First Contact."

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 4:30pm

Oh how I hate meddling Federation bureaucrats!

[Reply](#)

- [pico79](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 5:22pm

Don't forget Cromwell in 'Babe', jiggling his way to an Oscar nomination.

Peachy: keen point on the films, given that II, VI, and VIII are (by far) the best of em.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 5:30pm

Fun fact- Despite having actually lived through the 60's, my mother now refers to Steppenwolf's "Magic Carpet Ride" as "What's his name's song from the Star Trek movie" when it comes on the radio.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 5:39pm

It ruined a band, song and movie all in one fell swoop.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 6:11pm

Barf.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatt](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 6:40pm

@Steph

Well, Riker did get to crash the Enterprise in Generations, so that's something. He's also the only TNG character who absolutely, without a doubt, got laid during the movie series.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 7:33pm

Generations fits the villain rule too with the fate of the universe in the hands of... some guy, who wants to... be happy forever or... something.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/11/09 9:42pm

you forgot Data and Yar, skip.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 12:13am

plus i'm fairly certain that Troi got the living hell out fucked out of her in that episode with Matt McCoy, the veteran character actor who bares an uncanny resemblance to Baltimore Orioles great Jim Palmer.

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 5:09am

Very nice, Skip.

Also, I seem to remember LeVar Burton complaining in an interview that all the main characters got some, including the android, except for his, and the closest Geordi La Forge got was to crush on a hologram.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 6:47am

Jamie Cromwell was truly excellent in 6 ft Under...

and Skip, "That'll do Pig-Face...".. Brilliant!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 7:23am

Although I generally agree with the points about the villains in Star Trek movies, you can say what you like about Generations but Malcolm McDowell gives an outstanding performance as Soren. Just look at the scene between him and Stewart on the Enterprise in Ten-Forward - it's a great performance from both of them and hints at what the film could (and probably should ) have been like were it not burdened by the whole Kirk sub-plot. Vague motivation and ill-thought-through plot point? Sure, but imagine how awful the film would have been if it had been someone cast who COULDN'T have carried off that role...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 10:30am

@tibber: skipskatte's point was about the movie series, not the TV series.

@Richelieu: Yes, I forgot about his 6FU stint. I don't think I've ever seen him anything less than great.

@Prole Hole: Good point about McDowell. That 10-forward scene IS great. He's so much better than the other antagonists in the Trek films (save Montalban). Too bad the story is pointless.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 11:48am

Alurin - Agreed and agreed. Montalban will always be the ultimate as far as Trek films go (unless the second reboot film somehow casts Ian McKellan or something). Generations pointless? Yea. Actually I still think it's a good idea to kill Kirk off and actually have him dead (as opposed to Spock), and it's quite a brave idea too, that the hero's story needs to end for it to have some kind of meaning, but it's lost under so many layers of mediocrity that it's somewhat burried. It could have been Kirk's Unforgiven or Dark Knight (reassessing a hero's place in the world and questioning why he does what he does) - instead it ends up being his Waterworld (it exists for the sake of existing - although no pee-drinking fish-men in Generations so it DOES have that going for it...).

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 1:12pm

damn, you're right. i guess i overlooked it because i was too overcome with excitement about finally being able to discuss the uncanny resemblance between Matt McCoy and Jim Palmer.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 5:28pm

@Prole-

Am I the only one who was bothered by the fact that McDowell's "weapon" appeared to be one of those little Williams Sonoma creme brulee torches?

Mmmm. Creme brulee.

Spacey.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 7:52pm

@ John Barleycorn - nope, you're not the only one, but damn if I don't love me some creme brulee.

Still it's not the WORST thing with Generations...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/12/09 11:28pm

"Time is the flame in which we burn" You're right ProleHole, w very good scene...

I just rewatched Generations a couple of weeks back and didn't vomit as fart his time... I even watched the version sans Kirk, but was underwhelmed. Shatner's performance is one of his worst, though it has it's moments, and there's potential there... Still, the risks don't seem up to scale.

I quite agree with the poster above who says that the quality of the bad guy makes the film, and this has always been true, from the darkness of time to the latest Bond and beyond...

And right again: You don't know what a story's about until it's over even Kirk's...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/13/09 11:27pm

"Vomit as fart"... meaning 'vomit as far', of course, but it's my own personal best for typos... I hope you all enjoyed it.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

6/15/09 2:48pm

ah, Thanka Yous!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Kapow](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 11:22am

Capt Kirk, shuttle pilot

So why are Kirk and Spock gallivanting around in a shuttle? McCoy is there because its a medical emergency. The Captain and First mate have nothing else to do so they tagged along for the ride, right? Of course they're there because they're the main characters. Logically it should have been McCoy and some random shuttle pilot. It would have been interesting to see the good doctor deal with events on his own, but that's not how Roddenberry worked.

In retrospect it would have made more sense if the Enterprise were a small survey ship. That would explain why the Captain was beaming down to unexplored planets. Oh well, hindsight is 20/20.

[Reply](#)

- [m0nit0rman](#)Kapow

6/11/09 1:30pm

I think most of the Trek series fell victim to the "single passenger vehicle" mindset regarding shuttles and rendezvousing.

What's the point of "meeting up" with a ship that could make the journey one thousand times faster than your shuttle?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Kapow

6/11/09 2:20pm

They went out to pick up some smokes.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Kapow

6/11/09 2:48pm

I think the point might have been that starfleet was still at a relatively early period in their exploration of the galaxy, and so capital ships would have been needed even for simple exploration. They're so far out in the middle of nowhere, and always at risk of attack from the Romulans or the Klingons, that small scout ships would've been impractical.

But I agree with the point about the shuttles - the only practical reason why a shuttle would be used would be when beaming can't be done or for a relatively short range rendezvous with another ship.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Kapow

6/11/09 4:49pm

I don't normally call out typos, but I'm lovin' hercules' "nowhere." If that's not already a word, it should be.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Kapow

6/11/09 5:32pm

It's like knowhow, but specifically for navigating.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Kapow

6/11/09 6:56pm

Well, the analogue for TOS was always the old seafaring adventures. They sail around on the ocean, running into strange islands with mysterious tribes and strange powerful monsters. The captain always goes onland because life on the ship sucks hard. And that ship had better be big and strong, otherwise it'll hit a hurricane (or "ion storm") or privateers from some other nation and you'll never hear from it again.

Besides, the show would be no fun if it were a small research vessel.

"Captain, I've detected Romulans."

"RUN! RUN LIKE HELL! CALL STARFLEET!"

A notion from Enterprise I liked (though it wasn't executed as well as it should've been, like everything else from that show) was the idea that the Enterprise wasn't all that badass. Pretty much everyone they ran into could kick their asses.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Kapow

6/11/09 7:42pm

I was never sure about the idea of kids on the ship if they're out exploring the great unknown filled with such perils. Seems a little irresponsible to me not to get a desk job at Starfleet or something if you're gonna have a family.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Kapow

6/11/09 8:51pm

Yeah, that was one of the weaknesses of TNG. Exploring the galaxy is for people who are not raising young children.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kapow

6/12/09 6:42am

I remember reading as child that the Enterprise was supposed to be a heavily-armed survey ship, but I think they got away from that by making it the flagship, biggest and best... All that cam later, it seems to me...

[Reply](#)

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)Kapow

6/12/09 9:39am

The Enterprise arc, which hits you in 3D behind the Star Trek title in the new film, was just for Enterprise in TOS, other ships had other logos, but then the whole fleet adopted the Enterprise arc. Also the UFP is not military, but Star Fleet is there as the military structure but Roddenberry wanted it to be more like the peace corps.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kapow

6/12/09 11:20pm

I quite see the inspiration as the 'Horatio Hornblower', captain out visiting islands idea... One reason I thought Voyager might be great was that it took that one giant leap backwards: To the Odyssey and the Iliad, where you finally have warriors limping home, a t the mercy of the elements and the stars that guide them...

I was disappointed, but I think there's a lot fo good stuff there...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 11:52am

Best Kirk Dust-Up?

Kirk fighting that (fake) Andorian in the hallway was KICKASS. The way we see it already in progress is pretty jarring. Then he gets shivved?! Who ever got the drop on Kirk?! Khan in ST2 and THIS guy?? Damn space IS cold.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 11:59am

Also, thanks again for the great write up Zach. And I agree about that moment when the Companion/Hedford looks through her veil. I always found it very touching, it was my first memory of the episode as I was reading it so it was nice to see it get a shout at the bottom of the article.

Yes, Pizza Monster appreciates a good fight and true love too.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 1:28pm

The music used for the Companion scenes is really good too.

And, yep, by far the weakest part of the plot of that one is Cochran's turning on a dime when they tell him the Companion loves him. That doesn't make any sense at all, and it wastes an opportunity for some dramatic tension - they should have had Cochran agree that they needed to leave the planet, but that he was reluctant to leave the creature all alone.

Also, making Hedford a bitter shrew at the beginning makes her desire to stay at the end more poignant and believable...in a 60's TV kind of way.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 2:28pm

Cochrane's response is one of the things I liked about the episode. What I got from it was that understanding how morality waxes and wanes through the ages. And puritanism pops back up in history at regular intervals. One way to demonstrate someone not being of your time would be their attitudes toward personal things, like sex.

It would be like in the future if it was determined because of the spread of disease among humans that it was okay to have sex with dogs, and dogs were even bred to have sex with. Take your average non-pervert from this day and age and suddenly tell them that it's okay wonderful fine to fuck dogs, and they might not dig it, and think it's disgusting.

So Cochrane's reaction to me wasn't surprising at all. It was as if he was just told that he's been fucking a dog.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 2:31pm

Gentle-

What's with the new Avatar? Are you truly the most interesting man alive?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 3:10pm

I'm dumping that avatar in favor of Tanqueray's Tony Sinclair. It just hasn't cycled through yet. I get bored with avatars. And I think my sea lamprey avatar actually made people mad at me.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 3:19pm

Once Evil Mr. Spock, always Evil Mr. Spock.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 5:43pm

@JimZipCode -

Interesting info. Thanks. The music in the whole series, despite (or maybe even because of) its repeated use is just as important as the vibrant colors they used in making the show iconic. Only thing I don't like is the soprano voice they added to the title music (did that start in the second season?)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)The Pizza Monster

6/11/09 5:52pm

Before you change your avatar, GH, I have to say that I can't read your comments without hearing them spoken in a sonorous, Spanish accent.

Stay thirsty, my friend.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

6/12/09 6:36am

How can he give them the herpes and keep them too? I guess it truly is the gift that keeps on giving!

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

6/12/09 6:57pm

Once they have the herpes, then the worry is over and the real fun can begin. With herpes, you're either in or out of the club.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:49am

Zack and I ...

...must have different definitions of the word "wonky." Wonky, according to the Wiki, reverts to slang for a person preoccupied with arcane details or procedures in a specialized field. Zack seems to be using it to mean "unrealistic" or "unbelievable."

Also, I believe the term is "wacky" meaning strange in a fun way. "Whacky" implies something gets whacked.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 10:50am

P.S.- love your w0rk, thanks for posting!

[Reply](#)

- [texasannie](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 11:10am

I have always heard "wonky" used to mean something's not quite right. I realize the word sometimes is used like in "policy wonk," which is like a political rule-nitpicker, but I've been hearing and using wonky to mean things are kinda screwy.

And yes, I believe "wacky" is the preferred spelling, though I have seen a Michigan native spell it with the H before. Where's Zack from?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 11:16am

Zack is from the magical land where recaps are written at eleven o'clock the night before, and not all the spelling gets through perfect. :)

I fixed "wacky," and changed the "wonky"—I still like my definition just fine, but if there's confusion, a different phrase works just as well.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 1:46pm

Same here. I only heard "wonky" as meaning "out of whack" (like what I did there?) long before the phrases "policy wonk" and such came into fashion.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 3:36pm

This is one a them words with more than one meaning. If someone refers to themselves as a "public policy wonk," they mean that they like to know the ins and outs of public policy. If someone says that their "computer is acting wonky," they mean that it's acting funny.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Curtis E. Bear](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 3:37pm

Just like "poofter" means tourist, right guys?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 6:51am

This si classic difference between British and American slang-

Wonky: Square, detail-oriented, US;

Wonky: Screwed up, UK

Like 'Pissed' or 'Fag', but let's nlt get into that, shall we? (not that there's anything wrong with that)

[Reply](#)

- [Squirrels](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 9:25am

I'm from the US and I've only ever heard or used 'wonky' the second way. Particularly when something's wrong with something I've drawn but I can't figure out how ("the hand looks wonky"), but it's applicable anytime something's off-kilter.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 5:29pm

If someone here is proposing that we agree to disagree, I'm not prepared to agree to that.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/13/09 12:35am

First time I ever encountered the word "wonky," Harlan Ellison used it to describe the steering of the TARDIS. He used it in the "British" sense. The first time I heard the word "wonk," on an episode of "The Paper Chase" made for Showtime, it was used in the "American" sense. Thing is, it was used as a noun.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:53am

Mark Leonard...

...always seemed very cool to me. Spock was all like "I fail to see the logic in humans and what they do" and Leonard was all like "Oh, those humans, there they go again!"

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 3:31pm



Hear hear. Mark Lenard was one underrated actor. He had some of the best performances in TNG, particularly when required to go from perfect control to madness and not look ridiculous. Perfect father to Spock, as he was the only guy who could match the tone of his snappy responses.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 5:10pm

Yes, it is Lenard. I stand corrected and humbled.

[Reply](#)

- [AdamO](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 5:27pm

For sure. Also, of course:

Mark Lenard > Ben Cross

Jane Wyatt > Winona Ryder

I'm no reboot hater, but both of the original actors had a lot more gravitas.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 6:12pm

Poor Ryder had to play 20 years older than she is—her scenes sans age makeup were cut.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/11/09 8:48pm

@AdamO: Agreed. The reboot casting for the main parts was really good, but not for the secondary roles.

@Gleeth: It's just you. Your suspension of disbelief threshold needs to be adjusted. You're gonna freak out when he shows up as a Klingon captain in TMP!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 6:49am

Thank you, Ronald! That was driving me crazy...

And BTW, how was she in the ol' sack?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 5:45pm

Does this mean that Spock's true father is Ronald Reagan?

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 5:49pm

@Gleeth Yurnix: Well, your head must have exploded whenever James Sloyan guest starred on TNG/DS9/VOY

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/12/09 9:04pm

Not to forget David Warner in TNG and ST VI!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/13/09 12:37am

Not to forget Marc Alaimo as Gull Macet and Gul Dukat—the tufts of facial hair make all the difference.

[Reply](#)

- [J. Gooalurin](#)

7/22/12 12:36am

And Star Trek V (David St. John).

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 11:31am

the giving tree

That book has such a horrible message. Let yourself get used when you love someone, never stick up for yourself, be completely co-dependent. I never read it as a child, and a friend gave it to me as an adult, so I never had that overlay of childhood nostalgia for it. All I see is the boy using the tree and what does the tree get in the end—the chance for an ungrateful, old man to sit on its stump. I don't get why people love that book.

On the other hand, there's something realistic about it, too. Which is just sad.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissiani](#) hate to be that guy

6/11/09 11:42am

Yeah, Conditional Love is so much better than Unconditional Love.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)i hate to be that guy

6/11/09 2:11pm

I'm assuming you just finished reading The Fountainhead?

Take a breather before plunging into Atlas Shrugged. That's a whole mess o' words, right there.

[Reply](#)

- [mizerocki](#) hate to be that guy

6/11/09 3:31pm

That's why people love dogs, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stooli](#) hate to be that guy

6/11/09 3:33pm

As a great man once asked, What is Love?

[Reply](#)

- [Curtis E. Beari](#) hate to be that guy

6/11/09 3:57pm

Yeah, dogs suck!

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)i hate to be that guy

6/11/09 5:26pm

Dumbledore, I'm not arguing that love should be conditional. Without question, love should be about giving. But I AM saying that if you've gone to the extreme where—metaphorically speaking—you've reduced yourself to nothing but a stump for someone who's distant and ungrateful and only appears when they want something from you . . . well, then you've got some severe issues.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)i hate to be that guy

6/11/09 5:47pm

Hats off to Paul. My favorite lyric of all time.

[although it's "I don't begin to understand..."]

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)i hate to be that guy

6/12/09 6:38am

At the same time, they need each other... The tree gets to be needed... I'm not suggesting I'd choose to be that kind of tree, but in general trees don't have much choice in the matter

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 1:40pm

Is Kirk actually human?

McCoy is always going on about having to operate on aliens and the problems his lack of xenomorph biology knowledge, but in "Journey To Babel" we see Kirk shivved in his lower back and then later in Sick Bay McCoy states the knife just missed Kirk's heart. Just exactly where does Kirk keep his heart? Or is McCoy just that bad of a doctor?

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)MovieMike

6/11/09 2:13pm

Damnit Mike, he's a Doctor, not an expert in human anatomy!!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)MovieMike

6/11/09 3:11pm

Bones had his mind on Vulcan anatomy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)MovieMike

6/11/09 5:11pm

You mean like his drinking on duty?

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)MovieMike

6/11/09 5:19pm

Romulan Ale, downfall of many a Starfleet officer.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)MovieMike

6/12/09 11:32am

Don't forget about the Saurian Brandy.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)MovieMike

6/12/09 1:44pm

or the Cardassian Sunrises?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MovieMike

6/12/09 11:14pm

You had to bring up the Cardassian Sunrises, dincha?

Why not the Bud Light Classic, or whatever it were?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)MovieMike

6/13/09 9:33am

Or the Warp Core Breaches!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)MovieMike

6/13/09 12:27pm

But first, the Tranya...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 1:11pm

Spock's Teddy Bear

In "Babel", I love Spock's reaction when his mom refers to his having a pet teddy bear as a child - to McCoy's delight. Spock says something like, "Doctor, they have six-inch fangs." Reminds me of the joke - "Mom, they're not dolls - they're action figures!"

[Reply](#)

- [m0nit0rman](#)meyer

6/11/09 1:23pm

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

They ran with that in the Animated Series.

Damn thing was the size of a grizzly!

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)meyer

6/11/09 4:06pm

The animated series had some pretty good episodes. They also introduced the concept of a holodeck.

[Reply](#)

- [AdamO](#)meyer

6/11/09 5:33pm

Furthermore, I think it has been mentioned around these parts, Alan Dean Foster's writeups (they are a bit short to be called novelizations) of the ani-eps are pretty darned enjoyable.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)meyer

6/11/09 8:54pm

Actually, from Log 7 on, they are novelizations, a single half-hour episode adapted at novel length. Compare to Blish's adaptations.

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 5:02pm

A is for Andorian antennae

When I was a kid, the part where the Andorian's antenna breaks off always freaked me out for some reason. Thinking about it even now makes me want to lie down with a cold compress on my forehead.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/11/09 6:09pm

If it makes you feel any better, I think the guy wasn't supposed to be a real Andorian. I'd swear there was a line in the episode about how the security guard didn't know the antenna were that fragile and Kirk replies "They're not". I'm confused because I just saw "Babel" with my 11-year old and that line was missing. And blast Netflix for changing over their Trek inventory into something incredibly confusing to me. It'll take me a week to sort out that mess...

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/11/09 6:39pm

Thelev brags about being genetically engineered to appear Andorian, so those are definitely fake antennae. I guess they used duct tape to attach 'em.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/12/09 6:21am

It just pops off... and who knew they were so handy for carrying things?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/12/09 7:00pm

They should have used Super Glue or something.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 11:05am

I love Bones griping about the dress uniforms.

He is such a loveable grouch. Like Oscar.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/11/09 2:33pm

Seriously, though, did anyone know Ed Asner was still alive? He was great in Up!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/11/09 2:52pm

Good for you!

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/12/09 5:10am

Giving or receiving?

[Reply](#)

- [D-The One Lettered Man](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/12/09 9:36am

Say both Ed, you don't have to choose.

[Reply](#)

- [Hear God Laugh](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:25am

Ha

Nice typo on the picture caption.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Hear God Laugh

6/11/09 10:33am

Dang it, I fixed that last night. Must not've taken.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Hear God Laugh

6/12/09 11:30pm

What was it?

[Reply](#)

- [Kinja!](#)Zack Handlen

9/07/17 2:49am

*This comment or account was deleted on Disqus before The A.V. Club's comments were migrated to Kinja.*

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kinja!

6/12/09 6:33am

no, but they kept running into eachother at auditions. Like Gil Gerard and Lee Majors...

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)Zack Handlen

6/11/09 10:23pm

2 Really Good Ones

I definitely have to disagree with Zack on "Babel"; it's in my Top 10. The blend of intergalactic intrigue, family melodrama (remember, this was really the only time in TOS we were given a peak into a character's family life - and it's Spock's!), and great character beats for Kirk, McCoy, Uhura, Chekov... like next week's Friday's Child (another in my personal Top 10), it's like a proto-ST movie. And that scene between Amanda and Spock in his quarters, mother and son — she's the only one who really knows him — slays me.

I'd also rate Metamorphosis a little better. (Thanks Zack for pointing out that nice moment with the veil. Television directors today, for all their technical skill, miss those kind of grace notes, Mad Men and LOST excepted.) Strangely, if I had to introduce someone to TOS, Metamorphosis is an episode I'd consider; it has so many of the elements that made TOS work.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/12/09 6:20am

Babel

Babel seems aptly named, but I gotta say I've got a lot of affection for it...

I hated that chick in Metamorphosis as a kid. I thought she was whiny and silly...

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#) Zack Handlen

7/06/16 11:14pm

Janet Jackson Nasty Boys reference.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Friday's Child" / "The Deadly Years"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published June 18, 2009

[Comments \(108\)](#)



I've talked a lot about the virtues of James Kirk and his stellar first officer, but I've been overlooking the third member of science fiction's most delightful of holy trinities: Leonard "Bones" McCoy, a simple country doctor who spends all the time when he's not healing people either wanting a drink or arguing. (Actually, he probably wants a drink all the time, so scratch the "or.") McCoy has never been a favorite of mine. Age mellowed him by the time the movies hit, but on the original series, he's too often pissy for no real reason, and his "good old boy" attitude can be embarrassingly anachronistic. As much as the casual sexism and mini-skirts, he dates the show.

And yet... he grows on you. DeForest Kelly is a likable professional, and by about the fifteenth time he aw-shucks his way through some medical mystery, it's easier to just give in and go with it. McCoy's passion for his job and his patients is obvious and helps to smooth over the spikier edges of his personality—like, for instance, his fair bit of bigotry when it comes to aliens. He's a good man at heart, and makes for a solid Id to Spock's Ego; and in a way, the off-putting aspects of his character are kind of refreshing. Movies and TV shows have long told us the importance of following our hearts, and it's nice, whether intentional or not, to have someone who exposes how ineffective a philosophy that can be. McCoy is never anything less than an excellent physician, but as an advice-giver, his record is spotty at best.

He does occasionally get a chance to shine, though, and "Friday's Child" is pretty much his. The Federation is interested in negotiating for mining rights on a new planet, and to that end, McCoy has spent some time hanging out with the natives, a warlike tribe called Capellans. Why the doctor is sent instead of, say, a sociologist is anybody's guess; it could be that the Capellans' culture would only permit someone as neutral as a medic to visit them without causing problems. (Hell, a minute after Kirk and Spock beam down, they've already got a corpse on their hands.)

Whatever the reason, McCoy gives a briefing on the Capellans before the negotiations get underway. They're big dudes, supposedly over seven feet tall (although that tends to vary a lot), and to them "fighting is more pleasurable than love." Also, they seem to be wearing costumes swiped from a forgotten Dr. Seuss movie. Really, it's just a sci-fi gloss put over some classic Indian stereotypes from Westerns of the time, but there's enough cohesion to the culture that it works okay. And hey, there's also a lot of barbarian in there too, and who doesn't like Indian barbarians from Whoville?



The rub lies in the fact that the Klingons also want mining rights on the planet, and when Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and a doomed redshirt arrive on the scene, a Klingon is already there, filling one of the locals' (an ambitious dude named Maab) ears with all sorts of anti-Starfleet rhetoric. The redshirt gets a knife to the gut—well, it's more like a toy glaive, but just focus on the fact that it's stabby—when he goes for his phaser, and things get sort of awkward for a while. The current head of the tribe, Akaar, is a decent enough guy, but when you're dealing with a race that values combat over all other things, how easy is it going to be to settle the issue with plain speaking?

Not that easy, it turns out. Maab throws a coup, killing Akaar, and putting Kirk and the others in an even worse position; although they're a little better off than Akaar's very pregnant wife Eleen, who's life is forfeit because she's carrying a potential competitor for Maab in her womb. (This really is more medieval than Native American, isn't it.) Our heroes escape from camp with Eleen in tow, but that isn't the end of their problems. Their communicators are gone, the Enterprise is off chasing phantom distress signals, and they've got a whole mess of pissed off semi-giants who've spent their entire lives learning combat to deal with. Plus, Eleen isn't exactly thrilled to be included in the escape. Given the choice between death at the hands of her people, or bowing to the will of a group of strange aliens... well, it's not really much of a choice, is it.

"Child" is a collection of cliches, but it works well for all of that. Ridiculous costumes aside, the Cappellans are a credible threat; the Klingon's presence naturally increases the difficulties of the situation; and McCoy's relationship with Eleen, who grows to trust him only after he smacks her upside the head (she smacked him first, of course), is well-handled. The series often ends up as *The Kirk And Spock Power Hour*, so seeing McCoy play a major role is neat, and he gets in some great lines. ("Look, I'm a doctor, not an escalator!") It's also worth noting that, despite their growing bond, Eleen still knocks the doc out and escapes soon after giving birth to her kid (having grown up on sitcoms that waste whole episodes on deliveries-in-awkward-places, I was charmed by the fact that Eleen's delivery takes place off-screen, in about two minutes). She does try and save McCoy and the others when she meets up with Maab's group, but it's refreshing that she doesn't completely lose her own values and personality after being "saved."

The episode has a few demerits, though. The subplot that has the Enterprise distracted by a fake call for help is necessary to explain why they don't just beam down to the planet to see what's keeping the captain, but it makes Scotty look awfully dumb for taking so long to figure things out. (He makes up for it with a metal moment later on when the Klingon ship tries to block the Enterprise's path. Although it can't be that easy to block someone's path in three dimensional space.) Having the Klingons show up as a rival makes for solid continuity, but they seem awfully passive for what we've seen of the species. There's only one of them on the planet with the Capellans, and the Klingon ship that threatens the Enterprise mostly just hangs around. For all their fighting prowess, the Capellans couldn't put up much of a fight against, say, phaser bombardment. Why the pussy-footing? The whole subterfuge thing doesn't seem very Klingon, either. As for the Capellans themselves, how is it that a race that prides itself on its talent for combat could get its ass handed to it with such monotonous regularity by James T. Kirk? They guy doesn't even break a sweat.

Still, props to the ep for having the Capellans take down the Klingon themselves at the end, through a sacrifice play that actually holds consistent to their major philosophy. Maab puts the needs of the many ahead of his life, and after his death, Eleen's infant son is put in charge, with Eleen acting as his regent; it's a safe bet that the Federation will get all those "rocks" they've been clamoring for. You gotta wonder just how the prime directive works when Starfleet starts sending equipment and ships to a pre-tech planet (they haven't even invented bows yet—most likely because they're big on hand-to-hand). In arguing for the Federation over the Klingon Empire, Kirk promises that the Capellans will never lose the right to rule their home, and I think we can take him at his word. Even with that promise, though, it's a forced change. Maybe the whole Indian thing wasn't that far off after all.

If "Friday's Child" is McCoy's change to shine, then "The Deadly Years"... isn't. But then, nobody shines that brightly in an episode that tries for pathos and largely manages to achieve only dull discomfort. The high concept for this outing: a strange effect causes Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Scotty, and one poor crew-woman to age rapidly. Apparently old age is still hell even in the future, as our heroes struggle with memory loss, increased physical sensitivity, bad tempers, and some surprisingly credible make-up jobs. It's an unexciting concept that hasn't been thought out very well, and the resulting episode, a few quirky moments aside, is a let down.

The Enterprise is visiting to Gamma Hydra IV to check in on a science expedition lead by Robert Johnson. All they find are some very old corpses, plus Johnson and his wife. According to Spock, no one in the expedition was elderly, but the corpses all died of old age, and Mr. and Mrs. Johnson themselves appear to be edging past the outskirts of the Matlock demographic, despite Johnson's assertion that he's just 28 years old.

Clearly, something went wrong. But instead of quarantining the facility on the planet and trying to figure things out, everybody beams back aboard the Enterprise. Since the cause of the rapid aging could very well be biological and contagious, and given that this crew has already dealt with its fair share of bad bugs (like in "Miri," where Kirk was smart enough to keep anyone potentially infected off ship until they could find a cure), you'd think our crew wouldn't be quite so blasé about the problem. Sure, Kirk starts up a blue ribbon panel of experts—including a Commodore Stocker, who offers us some variation in Starfleet administrative personnel by being *passively* dickish, and Dr. Jan Wallace, a former flame of Kirk's, along with the standard peanut gallery—but it doesn't ever occur to anybody that the people who beamed down to the surface could be in danger.

And they are, they really are. It isn't long before Kirk, McCoy, and the rest start visibly aging (like I said, the make-up isn't bad, and it's surprisingly subtle, too; the changes start even before our attention is drawn to them), and with both of the Johnsons now expired, finding a cure suddenly became very, very important. Even worse, the Johnsons were crazy senile before they died, which means that in addition to no longer being quite as pretty, Kirk and the others have to deal with the knowledge that the longer they stay sick, the more their faculties will suffer. Not good for a doctor, or a science officer, or a chief engineer, but *catastrophic* for a star-ship captain.

There's potential here; it's not hard to empathize with a terror of growing old, especially before one's time, and while "Years" does exaggerate the effects of aging on the mind, it still stays generally within recognizable limits. Kirk forgets things, repeats himself, and whenever anyone points out his mistakes, he gets angry—as anyone who's ever dealt with a senile grandparent can tell you, that's not far off the mark. There are smaller touches as well, like Spock's increased sensitivity to cold, which makes a nice call-back to the heat of Vulcan mentioned in "Amok Time." And there's no attempt to mollify the harshness of the experience, either. Nobody learns a valuable lesson about how getting old is just a natural part of life.

Yet the episode never really feels all that personal. There are a few good bits—my favorite comes when Jan starts putting the moves on slightly older Kirk, and he realizes she's doing it because she has a thing for older men. ("What are you offering me, Jan? Love—or a going away present?") It's such a quirky, surprising scene, the wish fulfillment aspect being immediately undercut by the oddness of the lady's fetish. Jan never raises the issue again, and seems just as much interested in the young Kirk, post-cure, but you can't help wondering if their original relationship failed because Kirk still had all his hair.

Good bits aside, there's not much effort being put in outside of the make-up. What really kills things is the competency hearing that eats up a good chunk of the running time. Jack-disease strikes fairly quickly, and since we can't find a cure for it until the last act, we've got to fill the other acts somehow. "Years" chooses to fill them by having Commodore Stocker question Kirk's ability to captain the ship, forcing Spock to put his friend on trial and humiliate him in front of his peers. There's precious little drama in the sequence, aside from the occasional cringe, as we spend the whole thing having characters describe scenes to us that we've already watched. And honestly, Kirk *should* step down. It's not a criticism of his leadership abilities to say that being struck with a rare illness that makes him liable to forget stuff means he can't do his job properly; in fact, the only negative mark on his character here is his refusal to see the truth, no matter how many of his mistakes are pointed out.

Then there's Stacker, who starts off acting like a reasonable guy, and then turns into a moron as the script dictates. Once again, we've got an administrator who's on a schedule, so we hear the standard litany of complaints when Kirk refuses to leave Gamma Hydra's orbit. Stacker's polite about it at first, and when he talks to Spock about getting Kirk to relinquish command, it's hard not to see his point. But then he ruins everything by taking over the ship and ordering Sulu to set a course through the Neutral Zone. The hell? Are Commodores not taught basic space travel etiquette? You think they'd be even more concerned about maintaining proper diplomatic relations with an enemy than Kirk, and since

we're never given any reason as to why Stacker's so desperate to get to Star Base 10 (I see we used up all our clever naming skills when we geniused up "Gamma Hydra IV"), he comes off as a tool, and a poorly written one at that.

The only reason the Neutral Zone even comes up is to give us some suspense at the climax. Oh no, the Enterprise is under attack! Oh no, the Commodore has no idea what the fuck he's doing! We need Kirk on the bridge, but he's just so damn *old*. Wouldn't you know it, though, McCoy and Spock have just discovered the source of the problem (GH passed through a comet's tail, and I guess they had a choice between zombies or rapid degeneration and decided on the one that didn't require cannibalism), and, seeing as how Chekov was the only person to go down to the planet and be unaffected by the radiation, they determine that adrenaline—Chekov freaked when he saw the first dead body—can stop the radiation. Never mind that this is more than a little ridiculous (was Chekov terrified the entire time he was down there?), or that the physical effects of all that oldness should take more than few minutes to throw off, we have our cure! And Kirk demands he get it first, in the middle of a battle that the ship is losing, because he's the only one who can save everybody.

The treatment works, Kirk rescues the weak-ass Commodore and the Enterprise from the nasty Romulans (in a clever moment, he re-uses a mistake his elderly self made earlier to trick the bad guys with an out-of-date code frequency), and Stacker learns a valuable lesson as to just how awesome Kirk is. A lesson that doesn't seem to have been needed, really; while he made some stupid calls, getting Kirk out of the captain's chair long enough to get cured isn't one of them.

"Years" is plagued by lazy scripting. The quarantine problem just becomes more egregious as the episode continues, since once the landing party starts getting sick, the risk that the illness is contagious would seem to increase tenfold, but nobody gives a damn. We get a lot of aging cliches, and while it's fun watching everybody ham it up as elderly versions of themselves (hey, is that Shatner's actual hair?), that's not enough to make the whole fifty minutes compelling. A more honest connection to the central problem, and less manufactured dilemmas, and, well... I'm not sure you could get a great episode out of this premise, but you sure as hell could have gotten a better one.

#### **Grades:**

**"Friday's Child": B+**

**"The Deadly Years": B-**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- McCoy's baby-talk leaves something to be desired, but Spock's reaction is worth the silliness.
- Hey, we finally have an alien race that our heroes *don't* teach a valuable lesson to. Although McCoy does convince Elen to care for her baby, and that means that the baby becomes head of the tribe, so... nuts.
- Poor Lieutenant Galway isn't given much to do beyond get worried, get old, and get dead, but she does get one good line in: "That's a stupid place to hang a mirror." Why yes, yes it is.
- Tune in next week for "Obsession" and "Wolf in the fold."

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (108)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 11:02am

McCoy's Medical Book

It's great when McCoy says he's adding punching his patients in the face to his list of treatment options. (I can see it now - "Is that absolutely necessary?" "Yes, I'm afraid it is...")

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)meyer

6/18/09 11:09am

I think Zach was a bit hard on McCoy - I've always enjoyed his performance right the way through the original show, and I think it's a shame the movie series sidelined him - for the balance to work Kirk, Spock and McCoy need that balance, when one side of the equation is neglected it tends to throw the limits of the other side into focus.

Hard to defend The Deadly Years though, a B- seems a bit generous - one of the low points of Season Two. The trial scenes go on for EVER, then everything else is bolted through in the last five minutes. The hamming it up doesn't really add much - fun to begin with but it gets old quick - and yea, Kirk is kind of a dick in this one. And Shatner is rarely smugger than he is at the end here, which doesn't really help much either. Having said that, Nimoy is better at the "old" acting than any of the others, but that's not a BIG compensation.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)meyer

6/18/09 11:25am

I was torn between a B- and a C+ on that one—I wasn't annoyed so much as bored, though, which is kind of the line for me. It's definitely not very good, though.

And I don't hate McCoy, but he's generally better remembered than in actual practice. Kelley is fine, but he's not always well-treated by the scripts. (That said, I like him a hell of a lot more than Scotty.)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)meyer

6/18/09 11:45am

Don't worry Zach, I won't give your grades an F! I think what comes through with McCoy is that when he is given something substantial to do he's a good character, when he's just background with a few scenes he falls a bit flat. Get into argument with Spock, lose argument to Spock, have Kirk chuckle at you a bit isn't much in the way of character development for half the episodes you appear in.

Also - despite him being played by a Canadian, I have to defend Scotty simply because I am Scottish. It's on our birth certificates you know.

Name: Prole Hole

Date of Birth: 10/01/?? (none of your damned business)

Place Of Birth: Glasgow, Scotland

People You Can't Criticise In Public: Sean Connery, Scotty Off Of Star Trek, Alexander Graham Bell, Annie Lennox

People You Can Criticise In Public: Rest Of Human Race

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptormeyer](#)

6/18/09 12:33pm

McCoy always comes off as a bit of a dick. He's always second-guessing any decision that is made, and is always proven to be wrong. I think "The Tholian Web" is the best example of this - Spock is trying desperately to deal with the situation - Kirk possibly dead, freaky aliens trying to trap them - and all McCoy can do is stand next to him and bitch.

[Reply](#)

- [Jagoff Sumbitch of the Ozark S](#)meyer

6/18/09 12:36pm

"I'm prescribing a regimen of cranial trauma."

"Can I get a second opinion?"

\*smack\*

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)meyer

6/18/09 12:38pm

"If it's not Scottish it's CRAAP!"

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)meyer

6/18/09 1:31pm

Good point, Robert. It's one of the first things I thought when Old McCoy was touring the Enterprise with Data- he must have upped his Crawdad intake or something.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)meyer

6/18/09 2:14pm

Hey Zach, What's wrong with Scotty? he was always one of my favorites, although I guess when he's acting captain his decision making tends to fall into either whatever the default option is or whatever he thinks Kirk would do.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)meyer

6/18/09 2:19pm

It's when he gets relaxed, the Dixie creeps back to the surface. It happens to him in "This Side of Paradise" when he gets spored and starts rappin' to Jim-boy about Mint Julips.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)meyer

6/18/09 2:23pm

I think Kelley's best work as McCoy is in ST:TFF.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer

6/18/09 2:29pm

Porkchop-

Prole and I got into this a while back. He's never seen it! If anyone can help him out with a suitable SNL link, please do so.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

6/18/09 2:46pm

There's a great riff with the Scottish dad in "So I Married an Axe Murderer".

"Ach! There's a piper doon! We have a piper doon!"

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)meyer

6/18/09 3:34pm

Well, isn't McCoy Southern? He's just slipping back to his natural patois in unguarded moments. I speak with much less of a twang in professional occasions than I do fishing with my family. That's just how it is, ya'll.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer

6/18/09 5:43pm

PROLE-

Here's a transcript:

<http://snltranscripts.jt.or...>

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrmeyer](#)

6/18/09 11:10pm

Good call, Pat C, and I love the old grouch too! As for his accent, well he really is southern, y'all. i think he knows how it sounds (as opposed to say, True Blood, 'Sookie!')

@Prole H: I'm Scottish too, and in my family 'Braveheart' is of the table as well, Gibson's catholicism notwithstanding... How 'bout in your house?

@Sugartits... where yeh from, dahlin'?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holemeyer](#)

6/19/09 4:09am

You, Mr Barleycord, are indeed a superstar - thank you, kind sir!

@ Richelieu - Braveheart is a bit of an embarrassment to be honest. I mean, Patrick McGoohan give an unbelievably outstanding performance in one of the least-deserving Oscar films ever, but apart from that... well actually, thinking about it, my brother still thinks Braveheart is the tits - as you may have gathered, I'm the hipster dbag, sci-fi geek, nerdy IT guy in the family, he's the sensible one with a proper job, no drink problem and a normal life. I win on accuracy, he wins on everything else - wouldn't have it any other way!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holemeyer](#)

6/19/09 4:10am

\* I meant Barleycorn of course - no disrespect intended sir! Morning coffee hasn't kicked in yet.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugartmeyer](#)

6/19/09 9:21am

Richelieu - I was born in Texas, and will no doubt die in Texas. The one year of my life I did not live in Texas, I was astounded by the reactions my accent provoked up North.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrmeyer](#)

6/19/09 1:04pm

@Prole: I hate, hate, hate Braveheart, but for my family, Gibson's an honorary Scot...

@Sugartits: Here in France everyone always goes on about how hard Texans are to understand, which I totally don't get. The accent's not that strong and most of y'all talk slowly and clearly... I think it was more they just couldn't believe the shit that came out of Bush's mouth and just chalked it up to their ears or your accents...

[Reply](#)

- [K-Dogmeyer](#)

6/19/09 2:11pm

McCoy's accent in old age makes perfect sense. My father-in-law (now in his 80's) lapses back into German more and more as he gets older even though he's been in the US since the 50's. Soon none of us will understand a word he says, which is actually an improvement.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugartmeyer](#)

6/19/09 4:40pm

Richelieu - Hilarious note about Braveheart. I don't know where you live (if in Scotland, you already know this), but I have spent cumulative months in Scotland as a chaperone. At the Wallace Memorial, there is a statue of Wallace that looks suspiciously like Mel Gibson. Apparently the locals can't stand it, and have removed the head several times.

As far as the accent, YES, Texans speak very slowly. People mistake that for stupidity at times. (In Bush's case, the "nucular" drove me insane. We really know better!) And 1234, I didn't say my feelings were hurt. Quite the contrary. To my utter shock, men found it sexy. Women asked if I was putting it on.

[Reply](#)

•

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 10:14am

Oh No!

Classic.com I have not seen these or any that come after them! To CBS !

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:25am

I cannot post a new comment at work and I want to point out a little bit that needs to be edited, so I'll post it here.

I don't think you meant to say "Spock's Id". The Id is the part of the psyche that seeks to gratify it's urges. Spock is more of a Superego. I knew it would come in handy to minor in Psychology someday!

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:28am

"Spock's Id" sounds like a great prog band name though.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:30am

I agree. I would not be a proper nerd if I did not quibble over minor points, but Spock is the rational superego, McCoy is the emotional id, and Kirk is the ego that has elements of both.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:35am

I just mixed 'em up. It happens. (Although I'm leaving the super-ego out of this one, thanks.)

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:35am

It's a technical issue. Whenever I try to post a new comment, nothing happens. But I can reply to a comment. Weird.

We have all kinds of fun-prevention software on our computers here, so that could be the reason.

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 11:08am

If you went through all the trouble to become a doctor only to find out you couldn't save your own father, you might have a spiky personality too. Also, have we become so PC that we can't be a little racist towards aliens? I suspect McCoy had a t-shirt in his closet that said, "If you ain't from Earth, you ain't shit."

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 12:19pm

in fact, give all of the freaky shit they've been exposed to, I'd expect a fair bit of xenophobia.

[Reply](#)

- [The Durckk](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 1:19pm

I think the "can't post a new comment" thing is a result of using an older version of your browser. I have the same problem, and am using IE 6.0. Unfortunately, I don't have administrative access to install ANYTHING to my work PC, so I, like many others, am doomed to only replying.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 1:51pm

Posting original comments is for squares anyway. Replyin's where it's at.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 7:03pm

uh... yeah, that's what I meant. I don't know why Mikey thought I was talkin 'bout aliens.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/18/09 10:54pm

Before you can have Xenophobia you must be half afraid of Zeno. And before that you must be a quarter afraid, and before that ...

In short, no one can have Xenophobia.

[Reply](#)

- [permazorch](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 12:15am

@Adolph:

McCoy had a t-shirt in his closet that said, "If you ain't from Earth, you ain't shit."

I want that t-shirt.

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 1:57am

As opposed to xenophobia, which is the fear of Amazonian princesses and the series spin-off they star in with their female sidekicks which are embraced by the lesbian community.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 9:45am

and zine-o-phobia, the fear of amateur fan publications.

[Reply](#)



- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 1:09pm

I have that actually.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 1:21pm

Zune-o-phobia, the fear of Microsoft's mp...

I can't finish this comment—it's too lame.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 2:19pm

fear of Billy Zane could go in here somewhere...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/19/09 7:24pm

Fear of Billy Zane is... Everywhere...

Everywhere civilized, at least...

[Reply](#)

- [tabernacle](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

6/20/09 7:59am

And sheen-of-phobia, which is fear of men at work.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Poor Poor Bob](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 11:47am

Not an escalator

I mentioned this line back in one of your season one reviews. It still stands out in my mind as the worst, "I'm a doctor" reference in the show.

Take that one line out of that one episode, and I don't know that you'd ever have had a Bones catchphrase.

SNL got mileage out of it years late when Shatner was the guest host. The Enterprise was a rotating restaurant with Kirk as the Maitre De (you can all bite me on the spelling, I don't speak French). Bones wandered around the scene complaining that he's a doctor, not a waiter, chef, parking lot attendant, etc... until Shatner asked him to help a man who was choking on his food.

"Damn it Jim, I'm a doctor not an... oh, ok."

Great sketch, great scene from the old show, great writeup Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 1:11pm

Good call. Also reminds me of this from the infamous "Star Trek Comedy Album":

"Bones, this man needs a physical!"

"Damn it, Jim. I'm a doctor not a physician!"

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 2:02pm

Man, I would love to be able to watch that whole SNL episode again. That's the one where the Shat yells at the Trekkie nerds right? Legendary stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 2:33pm

It also had Khan (carvey) as a health inspector. Its where I learned of the regulations requiring sneeze guards on salad bars. I can't go into a restaurant without a salad bar without thinking of it.

Also, they put the pudgy asian guy on the bridge: "My God, Sulu! What happened to you?" "We all get older, Captain."

Awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 2:44pm

Crap. I think the fat Sulu bit was in the earlier Belushi parody, not the 1986 Shatner bit. I apologize.

[Reply](#)

- [Gorg](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 5:37pm

Here's the transcript of the restaurant sketch (not as good as an actual video but better than nothing):

<http://snltranscripts.jt.or...>

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 5:40pm

Interesting. So the "fat Sulu" bit was in both sketches. Hmmm.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 9:13pm

I find that many people miss the real joke in the famous "it's just a TV show!" SNL sketch. The joke isn't that Shatner berates the pudgy, dweebish Trekkies and heaps them with scorn — the joke is that Shatner then has to APOLOGIZE to the pudgy, dweebish Trekkies after blowing up at them, because they're his bread and butter. :)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 11:00pm

Ahem, sorry...

Maitre d'(hotel).. And we don't even call them that here. Therefore I say: Spell it however you f'ing want! It's american and America for the Americans dammit!

Now can I get an order of Freedom Fries, please?

I tried to sell a sketch a few years ago based ont he premise that the congress reallyt hought they could force the French themselves to call them 'Freedom Fries' and couldn't understand that we don't even call them 'Fries' in the first place. I think the probelme with thie idea was that I was probably right...

(and BTW 'French Toast'? Not so much. We call it 'Pain perdu' meaning.. wait for it...

'Lost bread'. That's because it's not a delicacy here, it's a way to serve stale bread from the day before without getting too grossed out.)

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/18/09 11:09pm

Apparently the phrase "Get a life" has been traced to that trekie skit.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/19/09 7:20pm

Never saw the restaurant sketch, butt he transcription is pretty funny (if a bit obvious).

At least it doesn't beat the simple, funny idea into the ground.

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Poor Poor Bob

6/19/09 7:27pm

I love how after Bones' "Damnit Jim, I'm a doctor, not a ... oh right." and he tries (unsuccessfully) to do the Heimlich on the choking customer, Nealon's Spock gives the customer the neck-pinch and he throws up the food. Classic!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Richelieu Jr

6/20/14 5:59am

Then it can't be an SNL skit.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 11:32am

The Deadly Years

wasn't that more or less remade in one of those shitty TNG episodes with the wannabe McCoy doctor? jesus, that shit was lame. Hey, she doesn't like the transporter either, isn't that a great callback to the original series? no.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holetibber](#)

6/18/09 11:52am

Tibber, I understand why Pulaski didn't last the course in S2 TNG, but at the time she was a splash of colour in a world constructed exclusively of beige. Of course NOW we know that TNG got better, but at the time at least she was a bit more spikey than the "ok lets have a conference about every damned thing" Bland Beverly & Co. Almost all of her storylines were, however, appalling, but that's not the character's fault.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissiantibber](#)

6/18/09 12:11pm

If they're not from Scotland, they're CRAHP!

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissiantibber](#)

6/18/09 12:26pm

I have no idea why that was posted down here. It was a reply to your comment above this one. I have some serious thinking to do...

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)tibber

6/18/09 2:15pm

Pulaski wasn't a splash of color, she was a splash of annoying bitchyness. and Gates McFadden was quite a but easier on the eyes to boot.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Castertibber](#)

6/18/09 2:23pm

Pulaski used to pull some Mr. Stiles-level Data hatin', didn't she? Damn luddite andrcist.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)tibber

6/18/09 2:30pm

Yeah, old and bitchy is never welcome.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)tibber

6/18/09 2:56pm

I loved Pulaski, and McCoy from what I've seen of him. I think I can just relate to a dedicated professional who's cranky as hell.

I wonder if Pulaski gets a bad rap because she's associated with the much-hated TNG Season 2. Maybe she wasn't as easy on the eyes as Crusher, but she was a hell of a lot more interesting. I particularly liked her relationship with Data: yeah she hated on him at first, but they eventually sort of bonded.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)tibber

6/18/09 4:18pm

I can appreciate that Pulaski was an attempt to inject some more personality into the crew, but I don't think it was sucessfull. I think they were shooting for an outspoken, independent thinker who calls out bullshit when she sees it, but they ended up with bitchy and annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)tibber

6/18/09 11:02pm

OK, here goes:

I love Pulaski and never liked Beverly. just the hair was enough to put me off, but she just didn't seem believable to me. Pulaski seemed like she might actually know something besides how to use a blow-dryer. I was honestly very disappointed when she left...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holetibber](#)

6/19/09 4:16am

Bland Bev was mnore consistant and probably, to be fair, did fit with the rest of the crew a bit better than Pulaski, and Pulaski's character was just a bit too close to McCoy (especially the McCoy of Friday's Child, actually, in a vague attempt to tie this back to the topic at hand) to really convince, but it was a good start and I'd have been interested to see where she would have gone. Twas not, alas, to be, and The Flapping Cardigan Of Normality returned in S3.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)tibber

6/20/09 4:59pm

I had no idea that Muldaur had been on TOS up til now... Colour me nonplussed!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 10:33pm

Four Rare 'uns

These two and next weeks are some of the ones that I rarely saw in syndication. I thought I'd seen them all as a kid, and I checked and cross-checked my handy 'monster-name episode list' and could never come up with the 73 episodes. I was always 5 or 6 short, including these...

Anyone else have this experience? I grew up in Colorado, FWIW. I know the syndication packages were different depending on where you were, but I've always hoped there was more to the story than 'That tape wasn't handy when we were throwing together our ad-hoc alliance.'

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/19/09 11:30am

Funny, I was thinking the same thing while watching "Friday's Child". I realized that I didn't remember much of anything about the ep. and that I had probably only seen it once, while as a kid I saw the others many times over. Same thing with "A Private Little War", "The Omega Glory", and "The Empath" (although I may have just turned that last one off whenever it came on - I didn't like it as a kid, and am looking forward to re-watching it).

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/19/09 12:47pm

"Omega Glory" was another rare one for me... And I'm right with you on hating 'Empath' as a kid... That and Kirk smooching would get me to let my brother watch Gilligan's Island (you know that one episode where they almost get off the island, but Gilligan does something stupid and the Skipper hits him with his hat?)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

6/19/09 2:22pm

I think I've mentioned this before, but for some reason "The Gamesters of Triskelion" never came on when I was a kid. At some point I figured out that there was this episode that I had unaccountably never seen. Now I actually avoid it, so that TOS will always be incomplete...

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/19/09 5:36pm

alurin, I imagine that decades from now, when you're on your death bed, someone will ask, "Do you want a priest?" and you'll reply, "No...show me The Gamesters of Triskelion!"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/19/09 7:17pm

Bow, Alurin, bow to the power of the aluminum foil bikini....

The first step is admitting that you are powerless before it, as are we all...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

6/21/09 2:52pm

I just don't want my last word to be "Quatloos..."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/22/09 12:04pm

Quat-loser!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)balurin

6/20/14 5:39am

I'd (thought I had) watched them all in syndication probably half a dozen times as a kid when suddenly this completely virgin teaser played. I was excited as all get out, but unfortunately the episode that followed was Is There in Truth No Beauty?

What—it couldn't have been Balance of Terror, or City on the Edge of Forever?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Jack Strawb

6/23/14 9:24am

Update: I've lost my Triskelion virginity.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [daveshayne](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 1:36pm

Shouldn't it be quarantining?

Just a silly typo I know and really I can't say I blame you for that - quarantine is one of those words that just doesn't look right no matter how you spell it. Silly English language with more vowel sounds than letters to represent them.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)daveshayne

6/18/09 2:35pm

You'll fix it now, bitch!

Just kidding. Seriously, love your work.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)daveshayne

6/18/09 10:49pm

As ever the 'problem' with English is the same thing that make sit such a versatile language for use around the world. When we don't have a word for something, we just take the damn thing: Rendezvous, anyone? They and explain that as far as spelling pronunciation. We liked it the French had it and we just took it. Score!

Here in France we have the Alliance Francaise, which is basically a bunch of old geezers who spend their time 'French-frying' foreign words so that spelling and pronunciation are logical (as well as trying to eliminate English ones, par exemple, it's not a WalkMan, it's a Balladeur (French for 'strolling man'))

'Quarantine' is another example of them Froggies influencing our god-given right to talk the way we wanna: It comes from 'Quarantaine', meaning the 40 days people were kept separated during the Plague to avoid contamination.

Result: English is a thriving language, the number one second language in the world, the language of commerce and travel with more words than any other language (by far). French, lovely, poetic French..., let's just say I've yet to meet anyone who really says 'Balladeur' They all use the correct, Japanese name for it: WalkMan (meaning the Man who Walks)

This has been useless info from pedant's cornea, with your host, Richelieu Jr.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)daveshayne

6/19/09 9:51am

"The French don't even have a word for 'entrepreneur'..."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)daveshayne

6/19/09 7:19pm

Sure we do:

"Trou de cul d'un president a deux balles"

[Reply](#)

- [Kinja!](#)Zack Handlen

9/07/17 2:42am

*This comment or account was deleted on Disqus before The A.V. Club's comments were migrated to Kinja.*

[Reply](#)

- [PhilWal](#)Kinja!

6/18/09 1:56pm

Are you saying that the ideal human is not James T. Kirk?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Kinja!

6/18/09 2:13pm

I thought McCoy was the Id? Irrational, emotional, argumentative. Kirk was the middle way, in between the yin/yang Spock/McCoy. Of cock.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kinja!

6/19/09 1:08pm

"Lego my ego!"

(Heh! I've been waiting years, YEARS to say that!)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 5:20pm

Anybody see Shatner on Conan?

Ugh. He needs rehab I hate to say. Unless he was reliving the "The Deadly Years" trial scenes. In that case: METHOD ACTING GENIUS

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

6/18/09 10:37pm

Funny how he's gotten in on the joke, isn't it? I've missed most of his rehabilitation, but it seems like everyone's gotten more comfortable with the fact the Trek is going to be on their tombstones. Even Nimoy.

I remember reading about the Beatles that when everyone wanted to talk about the band after they'd broken up, they took it badly and would say harsh shit, because when you're close to it, you want what you're doing 'now' to be taken seriously; Later, when it keeps coming up, the subject that is that this is work you've done that is classic and has stood the test of time, so you're more willing to acknowledge it.

Sounds right to me, though strangely, I've not had this problem.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Pizza Monster

6/19/09 9:05am

I think DeForest Kelley said he'd be okay with it so long as his tombstone didn't read, "He's Dead, Jim."

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 9:58pm

McCoy's chance to shine?

Come on, what about "For The World is Hollow & I Have Touched The Sky"? Was he ever better?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Chico McDirk

6/19/09 4:22am

Great ep, and a great performance from Kelly, only slightly let down by the predict-a-cure ending. Looking forward to that one!

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Chico McDirk

6/19/09 7:30pm

McCoy also shines in the episode where he and Spock get sent back in time and Spock starts regressing to his angry-ancestor-Vulcan. One of the first episodes where I realized that Spock and McCoy could carry their own story (Kirk was also sent back in time, but to another planet?) and shine on their own.

[Reply](#)

- [Chocolate Eating Jacket](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 11:07am

slam away boys

num num num look at that prego biscuit.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Chocolate Eating Jacket

6/18/09 2:01pm

even pregnancy cannot diminish her superhuman hawtness.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Chocolate Eating Jacket

6/18/09 11:03pm

I met her at the falafel place she ran in LA and she even gave me an autographed pic of her in the Catsuit! Grrr!

I think they're still trying to get my DNA out of the falafel mix...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/09 10:16pm

Music

Friday's Child had an original score by Gerald Fried, who also did Amok Time and Catspaw. Film Score Monthly's Jeff Bond says this score is "one of the most powerful and adventurous in the Star Trek canon". Has the first Klingon theme of the series, played over the redshirt death in the opening. I don't remember the music as capturing attention the way the Amok Time or Doomsday Machine scores do; but I haven't seen the episode in a while. Bond writes that "Fried's



three scores for Trek's second season were tracked into almost every episode that year that featured an alien culture; his blend of exoticism and brassy action writing epitomized the feel of the series in its prime."

[Reply](#)

- [Erik E Erik](#)JimZipCode

4/14/10 4:20pm

Right, that musical theme seemed to pop up in "Khan". The score was the highlight of an otherwise shoddy episode, for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Erik E Erik

6/20/14 5:36am

Like around 15-20 episodes similar in quality, Friday's Child is an iteration or two away from being an above average entry. There's enough there to be genuinely interesting: Klingons above and below; a new and militaristic culture; a pregnant woman played by no less than Julie Newmar; a script that in places works very well. It misses, but all the pieces are there.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Zack Handlen

6/18/09 3:37pm

McCoy

I always enjoyed his and Spock's dynamic. Apparently the little mute babe liked him too. Remember how she wanted to save him in the Other Butthead Episode?

But that one when he was dying? Didn't like that one at all.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart

6/18/09 10:39pm

And of course, 'Turnabout Intruder' where he splits the difference.

Seriously though, GH, I think you are clearly onto something on the archetypal level. There are tons of these triangles, often of mixed sexes\* as well...

\*See 'Turnabout Intruder', above.

[Reply](#)

- [Ruddy Ruddy](#)Zack Handlen

6/19/09 2:13pm

Gamma Hydra IV = The Crossroads

"Mr. and Mrs. Johnson themselves appear to be edging past the outskirts of the Matlock demographic, despite Johnson's assertion that he's just 28 years old."

Well, of course he's lying. Everyone knows Robert Johnson died in a Mississippi juke-joint after drinking a bottle of strychnine-laced whiskey at the age of 27.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Ruddy Ruddy

6/19/09 2:34pm

Gamma Hydroxycut

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen

6/20/14 5:32am

Worth noting: the editing in the teaser to Friday's Child is grotesquely bad. I don't think I've ever seen a stretch that poor on television. And the costumes (horsetails? and I swear one guy is wearing a pink unitard with a purple boa) are deranged. The show suffered badly whenever William Theiss was allowed to clothe anyone other than attractive women in minimalist gauze. I'm surprised how rarely he's mentioned. His work is often genuinely awful.

[Reply](#)

- [Albert Volta Hawking](#)Zack Handlen

6/22/09 11:41pm

I Just Watched an Episode of ToS...

And holy shit, that show is SO LAME ITS RIDICULOUS. TNG is so much better. ToS is absolute shit.

[Reply](#)

- [Jim McCaskill](#)Zack Handlen

4/15/17 11:50am

I'll give "The Deadly Years" props for giving a shout out to Season 1's much better Korbomite Maneuver, and that's about it.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Zack Handlen

6/19/09 1:04pm

Future worst band name ever candidates:  
Indian barbarians from Whoville

The Kirk And Spock Power Hour

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/06/16 11:32pm

Hamlet reference.

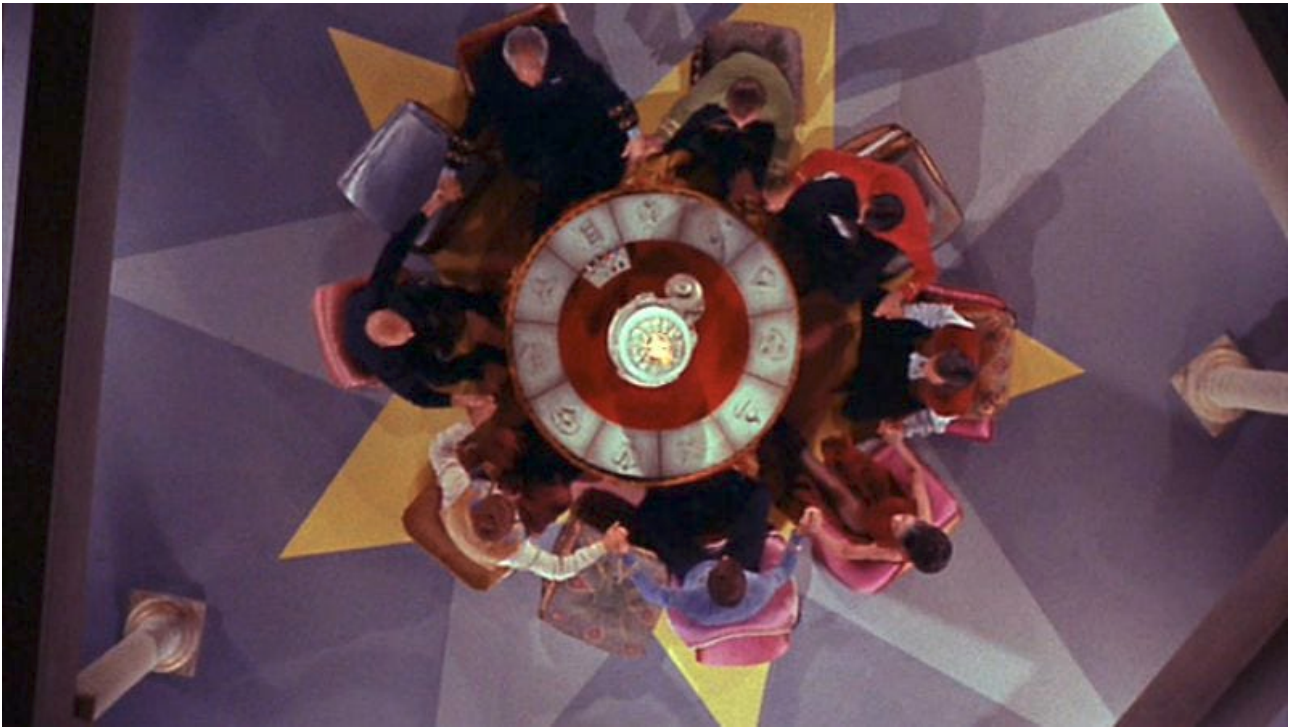
[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Obsession" / "The Wolf In The Fold"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published June 25, 2009

[Comments \(137\)](#)



James T. Kirk is obsessed. How do we know he's obsessed? Well, he has a persistent and unflagging commitment to an idea that may not be entirely worthy of such a commitment. (It's an evil mist. Quick, to the de-humidifier!) McCoy and Spock are both helpful in mentioning the problems with this; McCoy, in fact uses the very word. As does Kirk. And hey, it's even the title of the episode, so if you ever experience a moment of confusion—is Kirk irritated? Nauseous? Infatuated?—simply check the episode guide on the appropriate season, and you'll find the answer staring you in the face: "Obsession." This one is for the cheap (non-jewelry rattling) seats.

It may not be the subtlest episode in the show's history, but "Obsession" does manage to give us a slightly more complex take on James T. than we're used to, as well as handing down some decent back story, a creepy threat, and a dollop of ambiguity. Actually, it's probably less than a dollop; while the first half of the ep flirts with presenting Kirk as something less than the perfect hero, by the end, it finds a way to largely excuse his actions, even the ones that got crewmen killed. He learns his lesson, and the Enterprise saves the universe one more time from a destruction it wasn't even aware it was in danger from. (You ever wonder if people back on Earth ever read over Starfleet logs and just freak the fuck out? "Um, hey, I don't mean to be a bother, but.. what the hell is a 'doomsday machine'? And it says here that some doctor went back in time and destroyed all life as we know it, but it's okay because a couple other guys followed him and fixed everything, but they had to kill some girl. Wait, I'm sorry—they had to let her die. Okay, is there any way we could stop these guys from leaving their ships?")

Another planet, another scientific survey—this time, Spock, Kirk, and a few red-shirts are investigating Argus X's tritanium deposits. (Side note: it's generally used either as a MacGuffin or background detail, but I love the references to Starfleet's insatiable quest for minerals. It makes good sense; one of the reasons we're going to have to leave this planet eventually is that we're just going to run out of natural resources, no matter how politely we use them. Star ships must take an incredible amount of material to construct and fuel, not to mention colonizing new worlds, so it's a nice nod to realism that the Enterprise, in addition to its other duties, is always on the hunt for good rocks.) A sweet odor fills the air, like honey, and Kirk, apparently knowing more than he initially lets on, sends the red-shirts to investigate. They're attacked and killed by a sparkling cloud, their bodies drained of red corpuscles... and Kirk isn't really surprised at all.

There's nothing quite like a good Ahab complex to fill an hour—it's a way to make a lead character do unlikable things for sympathetic reasons ("The line must be drawn here!"), and it gives a writer a clear through line to build an episode around. Plus, it's easy to relate to; most of us don't own whaling ships (sigh), but we can at least understand what it's like to be so drawn to a thing that it drives every other concern from your mind. Kirk's need to defeat the Fog isn't developed as smoothly as it might have been, and the obstacle that's placed in his path (yet another ship-to-ship rendezvous; thankfully, no administrators are involved) is more than a little contrived, but the drama inherent in the basic conflict still rings true. What happens when the man responsible for the Enterprise, and everyone aboard her, suddenly loses his perspective?

Apart from a few more red-shirts getting drained, not much. (Well, the vaccines they're supposed to deliver are supposedly perishable—a trope they've used before—so maybe we get a couple of old sick people dying, too.) It helps that Kirk's got a decent motivation for his, ahem, you know, what's the word—fixation. Eleven years ago, he spent his first duty after graduating from Starfleet aboard a ship named the USS Farragut. Its captain, a man named Garrovick, taught Kirk a lot, so Kirk was understandably dismayed when a gaseous cloud (just like the cloud we saw on Argus!) killed Garrovick and a bunch of others. Worse, Kirk had an opportunity to shoot the cloud with his phaser, hesitated, and now blames himself for the deaths. It's not going to happen again, no matter what, and Kirk doesn't care how many have to die to make sure the cloud dissipates. Permanently.

"Obsession" has its flaws. Having an ensign repeat Kirk's "mistake," leading to more deaths and Kirk's over-reaction, is an unimaginative but decent way to show how seriously Kirk's head is mucked up, but making that ensign another Garrovick—the son of the captain Kirk so revered, in fact—is really pointless. It's a mistake we've seen before; taking a reasonable conflict and then screwing it up by trying to heighten the stakes in an unreasonable way. We've never seen Garrovick before, we'll never see him again, so why try and make him more important than he needs to be?

There's also the way the second half tries to mitigate Kirk's actions by making the cloud into more and more of a threat. Initially, the oddness of the situation makes Jim's need to find a solution appear unhealthy; the Death Fog seems restricted to the planet, so sending more bodies down to get murdered is hard to justify. Plus, contrived or not, there's the fact that definite lives hang in the balance when it comes to the vaccines. Kirk actually says he's willing to let people die to get the job done, and that makes him come off as a dick. That's a good thing. James T. is generally shown in such a consistently perfect light that having him behave like a regular, mistake-prone human is a nice change of pace.

But then it compromises by having the honey cloud ('ware the farts of Pooh) not just the cloud responsible for the deaths on the Farragut, but other deaths as well, capable of interstellar travel at incredible speeds (Warp 8! It's a fog that can hit *warp 8!*), and, near the end of the episode, just getting ready to reproduce itself a thousand fold. (Are there other clouds like this in the universe? Is this one an industrial accident of some kind?) No matter how many people lose out on the vaccines, Kirk saved a lot more lives by sticking to his guns. Obsessions are less dramatically compelling when they're wholly justified; the biggest lesson that Kirk learns here is that, no, it wasn't his fault that most of the Farragut crew died. So not only is his current mistake mitigated (his biggest crime is being a dick to Ensign Garrovick), his decade old mistake is dropped as well. I bet if he reached into his pocket, the bastard would've pulled out a peanut butter cup.

Plus, the Fog (where are the leper pirates, I ask you? I demand leper pirates!) is never really adequately explained. That wouldn't be a problem normally—I don't mind mysterious threats that stay mysterious—but when Kirk starts making wild assumptions about the thing's life cycle in the final act, and those assumptions are proven correct, it makes you look more harshly at the way nothing we see makes much sense when its put together.

I did like how the cloud appeared *behind* the people looking for it on the planet both times. Sure, you take one look and think "Fog machine behind the fake rocks," but if you see past that, it's a spooky, understated visual. We also get another Spock and McCoy chat, which are always a treat, with the two of them ultimately teaming up to try and talk Kirk back from the precipice. Kirk's final answer to the problem—using Ensign Garrovick and himself to lure the creature to an anti-matter bomb—is suitably ridiculous and the tension is well played. One of my biggest problems with season 2 so far has been a certain weakness in the writing, mainly in the way that premises aren't paying off as solidly as they

should. "Obsession" is a perfect example of this; it's got a strong idea, but it gets sloppy in the details.

"Wolf In The Fold" has its own strong idea; but what's so weird is the way that idea doesn't actually surface till the last ten minutes of the episode. The script by Robert Bloch has some of Bloch's trademarks (there's a clunky mystery, Jack the Ripper makes an appearance, and women are treated like a completely different species)(even more so than usual, I mean), but Bloch generally had a strong sense of story; this one is all over the place. In some ways, that makes it more interesting to watch than the fairly straight-line "Obsession," but interesting or not, it isn't very good.

Before the episode even gets going, we have shit happening, although we only hear about it in a few lines of dialogue between Kirk and McCoy. There was this explosion that gave Scotty a serious bump on the head, leading to a concussion; so he's been down in the dumps lately. Even worse, the explosion was caused by a woman (McCoy just throws that one out there, and nobody bothers to explain it. Was there a woman in Engineering who messed up? Did a jilted ex throw a grenade?), so Scotty is supposed to have issues with women in general because of it. Ah, the clean and insightful grasp of psychology that this series is so well known for.

Only, Scotty doesn't seem all that woman-hating. He leers as much as anybody when Kirk and McCoy take him to see a belly dancer on Argelius, the pleasure planet, and is utterly delighted when Kirk has the belly dancer drop by the table for a chat. He starts in about how awesome fog is, and the woman acts like she's really into it, which makes you wonder if maybe a little money didn't change hands when Kirk was talking to her earlier. Scotty and the rejected Bond girl go for a walk, Kirk and McCoy are all set to go get laid or something (it's hard to tell—they're excited to go to this place "where the women—" but they're *so* excited that they can't be bothered to complete a damn sentence, so maybe there's a cribbage tournament going on somewhere), when a woman screams in the (incredibly foggy) night. The belly dancer is dead, from multiple stab wounds, and Scotty is cowering nearby, knife in hand, with no memory of what just happened.

A set-up like that can hook you, but it has one big flaw: nobody is going to think that Scotty is the killer. The best way to handle that is to acknowledge it immediately and make the episode about clearing Scotty's name, and not about whether he could've gone all kill crazy. "Wolf" sort of does that, but we waste far too much time with Kirk and McCoy discussing Scotty's concussion and how that could've affected his actions. I really don't think a concussion could make you stab somebody multiple times, or kill two other people just because they were within knife range. Maybe if the whole "a woman caused the explosion" thread had exposed something much darker and nastier in Scotty's persona, there might have been doubt here, but as is, it's pretty pointless.

Scotty is handed over to the authorities, a weaselly dude named Hengist (John Fiedler, aka, the voice of Piglet) and Jaris, the local prefect. (Apologies if I ever type "Jarvis." This episode would've been so much more awesome if Thor and the Hulk had a battle in the middle of it.) Argelius is a peaceful society, so everybody's real shocked about the murder; "The law of Argelius is love," which I gotta call bullshit on, because I don't think love would be much help in resolving four way intersections or property disputes. I also don't believe that a planet based on hedonism—a planet that happens to be an important port for the Federation—could be without completely violent crime. It would be sweet to believe that, left to their own devices, drunken horny idiots would never cause anyone any problems, but come on.

Things proceed as you would expect. Scotty has no memory, women keep dying around him, Kirk and McCoy get more and more worried while Hengist does the beauracrat thing and Jaris tries to be reasonable. Kirk argues that there's equipment on the Enterprise that could clear Scotty's name, but the whole thing has to be resolved under Argelian law; because of the planet's status in the Federation, some diplomacy is necessary, so they've got to play along. I'll buy that. But in waiting for the next shoe to drop, I got bored. The situation doesn't really change until Jaris's wife has a seance or whatever (it's like the Vulcan mind meld, only with incense), and she learns that there's an evil presence in the room named Beratis Kesla Redjac. Then she gets stabbed before she can give any real answers.

There's a hilarious scene afterwards with Kirk, McCoy, and Hengist chatting about the situation, while Jaris mourns over his wife in the background and everybody ignores him. Whatever you may say about Scotty's feelings towards women, at least he seems visibly upset by the situation. You half expect some big twist at the end that reveals the whole thing was a mind game to get Scotty to start feeling so bad about getting exploded on. But one of the few good things about "Wolf" is that the ending manages to outdo even that. It's like Bloch wrote the first couple acts, went out for some

drinks, and came back six months later and finished the script without bothering to reread what he'd already got down.

Everybody winds up back on the Enterprise, so we can have another courtroom/interrogation scene in which we learn about the magic powers of computers to tell truths from lies. (There's also this thing called a psychic-tricorder. It's fun watching early sci-fi shows, because it all comes down to what Dr. Spaceman once said: "Science is whatever we want it to be.") There's more talking, a couple of red-herrings are introduced—the dead belly-dancer had an ex-fiance who got jealous, and a father, both of whom were around the night she was killed. I like the idea that on Argelius, jealousy is a horrible, horrible thing, but you could dump both these guys from the episode and not lose anything from the story.

All the questioning doesn't really solve the problem. Scotty is cleared, but there are still a bunch of dead women lying around. So Spock asks the computer about "Redjac," and that's when things get crazy. It turns out the killer is *Jack the Ripper*. Who is apparently this alien creature called a mellitus that can possess people and lives off of fear. It's been traveling the galaxy on a killing spree for centuries, and it landed on Argelius because everybody was so happy, and ripe for gutting. Scotty just had one of the crappiest cases of wrong place, wrong time in history.

It gets crazier. Kirk figures out that Hengist has a connection to the entity, and when Hengist tries to escape, Kirk punches him out. He was dead all along, possessed by the creature—which now climbs into the Enterprise computer.

See, that's what the episode should've focused on. With only ten minutes left, we finally had something to give a damn about. Sure, the Enterprise computer's been screwed with before, but hearing a disembodied voice screaming for your death is tres spooky; as is the vision of hell (or colored mist) we get in the computer display screens. Scotty's murder trial eats up two thirds of the episode and basically has nothing to do with anything. He doesn't help defeat the monster in the end, we never think for a minute that the charges will stick, and the solution to the mystery is so utterly out of left field that it could've had any other kind of build up and made about as much sense.

There are some clever bits that come out of dealing with a possessed ship. Kirk has the crew injected with a happy drug that makes everybody immune to fear, and Spock manages to drive the ghost out of the machine by setting the computer to calculate pi "to the last digit." That forces the thing back into Hengist (eventually), and Kirk and the others bring the poor dead sap to the transporter room where they beam him into space at the "widest possible dispersion." Which is bad-ass, definitely.

Too bad the rest of "Wolf" is such a slog. I like surprises, and I like it when a show tries to shake things up a bit, but this is not really a good example of either of those things. Too much time is wasted on a perfunctory and lazy premise, with a flurry of action at the end that serves mostly to irritate the viewer instead of reward them for their patience. Viewed intellectually, it's a fascinating example of what happens when a filmed script just hasn't had enough drafts (and there is something refreshing about the clunkiness here; most modern bad TV is just thuddingly mediocre, not actively insane), but as an actual episode, it's a drag.

#### **Grades:**

**"Obsession": B**

**"Wolf In The Fold": C+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- The dangers of shooting out of order—red-shirt Rizzo, who gets a few lines and dies in "Obsession," pops up as a transporter tech in supposedly later "Wolf In The Fold."
- McCoy to Kirk: "You know the greatest monster of them all, Jim? Guilt." Really? Worse than Hitler? Or a vampire? Or some kind of vampire-based Hitler?
- Unintentional resonance: McCoy bitches about the transporter "spreading man's molecules all over the universe" in "Obsession," and in "Wolf In The Fold," they... spread a man's molecules all over the universe.
- Next week: "The Trouble With Tribbles" and "The Gamesters of Triskelion."

## DISCUSSION

- Community (137)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:09am

"The Gamesters of Triskelion"

Let's bet some quatloos up in this motherfucker!

I wager 400 against the newcomers!

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)Dino

6/25/09 11:27am

800 quatloos that a Utahraptor can take out whatever Dino is, even if Dino gets to use that double-ended pendulum-shaped weapon.

Also, 400 quatloos that, somehow, Kirk will get his shirt ripped by the weapon, even if he is merely watching the action from the stands.

400 more quatloos if someone can get that "Star Trek fight scene" theme music out of my head!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Dino

6/25/09 11:30am

Crap, now its in MY head!

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Dino

6/25/09 11:32am

YOU'RE KILLING HER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Dino

6/25/09 12:45pm

I think the next review does need to address the sheer awesomeness of Alexander Courage's incidental music. The only themes that really don't work (for me) are the ones where he's shooting for "playful" or "pastoral" — the primary offender being "This Side of Paradise."

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)Dino

6/25/09 1:16pm

Courage's theme music is one of the least appreciated parts of the show. My favorite piece is the "sad, lonely" dirge that plays when a character is alone in their quarters contemplating the universe.

The "Combat!" anthem is pretty cool too, and still stuck in my head.

I was tempted to sound them out for you all - Don, Don Don Don, Don Don Don, Don Don DON Don Don... but will resist the temptation to continue for a donation of 1,000 quatloos.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino

6/25/09 2:53pm

I claim dogasaurus.

Flintstones episode 18 says "snorkasaurus" but I say that shit ain't canon.

Talking Dino, INDEED!

Also, I freely concede in combat to Utahraptor because you're funnier than me and a Mormon dinosaur is a scary thought.

[Reply](#)

- [EponymousDino](#)

6/25/09 3:10pm

Anyone ever notice how the "Star Trek fight music" and "Torgo's theme" from Manos: The Hands Of Fate are practically the same? Well, not exactly, but close enough in a "Mary Jane's Last Dance"/"Dani California" way.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must dietDino](#)

6/25/09 4:34pm

Oh, great, now I have "Torgo's Theme" in my head!

Not really. I've never seen it.

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_HungusDino](#)

6/25/09 5:04pm

The Master will be angry

[Reply](#)

- [El SantoDino](#)

6/26/09 12:51pm

You ever realize how similar "Torgo's Theme" is to the outro theme of "Lost"?

Think about it, won't you?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu JrDino](#)

6/26/09 1:08pm

Hear, Hear for the Courage kudos, even though I do agree that his 'pastoral' stuff, as you called it, is kind of fruity...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCodeDino](#)

6/26/09 2:07pm

Alexander Courage did \*NOT\* write most of the music mentioned in this thread. He wrote music for the two pilots, and Man Trap and The Naked Time; then he skipped season two, off doing Dr Doolittle, and returned to write for a couple of season 3 episoded: Enterprise Incident and Plato's Stepchildren.

The "combat theme" from Gamester's is tracked from Gerald Fried's score for Amok Time. Much of the music in Obsession is tracked from Sol Kaplan's score for Doomsday Machine. Not sure about This Side of Paradise (haven't seen it in years), but the music when Kirk is shaking off the spore's control is from Courage's score for The Naked Time (toward the end when they are engaging the warp effect).

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCodeDino](#)

6/26/09 2:52pm



Actually that pastoral / love them from This Side of Paradise might be from Gerald Fried's score the Shore Leave. The theme for "Ruth". Not positive, though.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Dino

6/26/09 5:28pm

The theme for Ruth in Shore Leave is indeed the same as for Jill Ireland's character in This Side of Paradise.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Dino

6/26/09 7:45pm

@Mr. ZipCode

I agree with others that the music is a vital and underappreciated part of the original series. Keep posting the music trivia - it's very interesting!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dino

6/27/09 1:14am

I agree, educate me! I've got a 3 CD set saved to my MAC, but not titles, so I just say 'TOS Love music' or 'Fight song', etc... I have no idea as to the episodes or composers as I wasn't in a place where I could access the web at the time...

Any of you fans wanna point me towards a track listing, I'd be mighty obliged... In the mean time, I'm with Meyer: Keep it coming.

(PS: Whoever's fault, that pastoral shit is pretty fruity!)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Dino

7/04/09 4:09pm

RE: track listing

Is this what you have?

amazon/Star-Trek-Original-Television-Soundtracks/dp/B000001OZS/

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 12:47pm

Jack The Ripper, Really?

Even at 12, when I first saw this, I thought that the whole Jack the Ripper thing was utterly absurd. I mean, positing him as some kind of evil spirit that hops planets and kills is fine, but it always seemed like the worst kind of *dues ex ripina* kind of ending.

The Animated Series actually did a better version of the "possessed ship's computer" with an episode called "The Practical Joker."

[Reply](#)

- [Don Staples](#)barefoot jim

6/25/09 2:42pm

I always loved that in Babylon 5 the Shadows picked up the real Jack and kept him in suspended animation for whenever they needed an inquisitor.

In fact, everything about that show was great. Review that!

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)barefoot jim

6/25/09 4:07pm

@Gleeth I'm not so sure that's much of a defense of Season 3. Though I will admit to liking some of those S3 episodes because of the sheer audacity in some of the crazy premises. Abe Lincoln? No. Shootout at the OK Corral? Yes!

But no doubt the goofiness factor did start to kick in during Season 2.

[Reply](#)

- [Snugglesaurus Rex](#)barefoot jim

6/25/09 4:35pm

I saw a great and very long interview of Leonard Nimoy that explained the progression of the 3 seasons fairly well.

Nimoy thought that Roddenberry wasn't the greatest writer, and that his greatest contribution to the series was his script doctoring. In the 1st season, Roddenberry rewrote many of the scripts until they made sense. In the second season, he wasn't around as much due to conflicts with the network, and was fired from the third season. Many of these scripts in the second season seem unfinished or nonsensical because there wasn't much oversight from the creators of the show at this point, and there was virtually none by the third season.

Nimoy had a lot of problems with the scripts. Getting into this season, I can see why.

I'm glad I finally caught up to the blog.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)barefoot jim

6/25/09 6:00pm

@Gleeth: Agreed. The JtR episode of B5 was pretty awesome.

One thing that always annoyed me was the DS9 vs. B5 debates. It was like the David Lee Roth vs. Van Hagar tiff—so dumb. They're both good! Better than any other sci-fi shows ever, with the possible exception of Firefly.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)barefoot jim

6/25/09 6:39pm

Season 3 is still better than the first season of TNG. and probably the second season too.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)barefoot jim

6/26/09 7:50am

@ tibber - Root canal work is better than S1 and 2 of TNG

I must admit I really like the revelation about Jack the Ripper ten minutes from the end of of Wolf. Not so much because it's Jack the Ripper, but somehow if this creature has been jumping from planet to planet, I like the idea that it came to Earth, did it's thing, moved on to the next one, and now finally humanity has caught up with it again. It's not that it's credible or even vaguely plausible, but I think it works because it manages to convey a wider sense of the universe Star Trek exists in in and the creatures that inhabit it in just a few words without having to show a great deal - that's a tricky balance to strike because although the addage "show, don't tell", I think one of the things that made the original Star Wars films work is that they were also able to convey a much greater sense of the universe they exist in with a few scattered throwaway references (such as the clone wars) but without having to show you everything because there was a problem at hand (big scary Death Star et al). It's only when the prequels went into punishing, punishing detail that much of that universe collapsed in on itself because all the really cool ideas the viewers held in their heads about what those throwaway references MIGHT mean were then juxtaposed with the rather sad reality.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)barefoot jim

6/26/09 7:51am

That should read \*although there is the addage,show don't tell....\*

Sorry, typing police!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

6/26/09 12:47pm

@Prole, I'm right with you on this. I quite like the concept as well because it works on a conceptual, archetypal level. That said, the execution leaves a bit to be desired...

@Snuggle. I'm sure what you're saying is true, but Gene Coon had a hell of a reputation as a script writer, doctor. David Gerrold says he was reputed to be able to tell the budget of a script by simply flipping through it and weighing it in his hand, which is a gag, obviously, but still shows the admiration he inspired.

Roddenberry was known for laying down the big ideas 'Yes, this can happen/ No, Kirk wouldn't do that' but his own writing is often dull and clunky...

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)barefoot jim

6/26/09 7:52pm

Barefoot Jim wrote above, "But no doubt the goofiness factor did start to kick in during Season 2." However, season 2 included overt comedies such as "Tribbles," "A Piece of the Action," and "I, Mudd," plus Scotty's scenes in "By Any Other Name"; perhaps whatever goofiness began to creep into the non-comedy episodes might not have done so if the comedies hadn't been produced.

Also, as I've written elsewhere, "The Way to Eden" (the complete version with all the music and songs) has to be considered in its proper context: as a way to emulate the then-new Broadway musical "Hair," which had already generated hit singles (e.g., the Cowsills' version of the title song) and a very popular cast album. I saw this episode first-run (age 12) and my parents went to New York to see "Hair" shortly thereafter, and we had the 8-track of the cast album in the car a lot, so the connection may seem clearer to me than to the average season-3-disdaining viewer. (My worst-stinkers list: "The Mark of Gideon" and "The Lights of Zetar," followed by "And the Children Shall Lead," rendered somewhat less awful because of its original George Dunning score.)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim

6/27/09 1:00am

Oh God, 'Gideon' and 'The children...' I hear you, my friend...!

[Reply](#)

- [lost\\_limey](#)Eponymous

5/08/13 11:34pm

Van Hagar sucked

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 1:25pm

I think...

..instead of ruining season 3 with space hippies, maybe they should have encountered some form of new and strange alien life form that was, you know, kinda pleasant. And then they'd just go on their way. Possibly after a briefing.

Well, maybe not. Still better than space hippies, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 2:01pm

Or, they could perform a routine geological survey of a planet, finish up with nothing extraordinary happening, congratulate each other on a job ... done, have a few drinks, then move on to the next planet.

Of course, this was pre-TNG, so there was no bar to meet in. No, in the TOS days, if you wanted to drink, you drank alone in your quarters, like all self-respecting alcoholics do!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:18pm

Utah- From what I've seen, most TOS drinking occurred in sick bay. Either for "medicinal purposes" or because the Ship's Surgeon was a drunk.

Gleeth- I'd like to suggest that we'll have to agree to disagree on this one, but I'm not prepared to agree to that at this time.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:43pm

I always wanted to see an episode focusing on one of the daily lives of one of the crewmembers scurrying around in the background. They're orbiting above some planet. A crewman is taking some bit of machinery to the engine room... then BOOM! The ship is rocked around, nobody knows why, they see Kirk and Spock running past them to the transporters for some unknown reason, etc.

Because you never see any newspapers or blogs on the Enterprise, and the Captain's logs are probably not for general consumption or updated very frequently, I always thought of it as a hotbed of rumors and speculation, with most people not knowing what the fuck was going on. I thought that might make a good episode in some way.

Heh. "Captain's Log, supplemental. Yes, I paused in the middle of this tense situation to update my log."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:53pm

There was something like that in TNG, I think where the episode focused on three young crewmembers and it was rather weird because it had the whole "spin off" vibe, but then nothing ever became of it.

And there was a Voyager where Janeway took it upon herself to help three young misfit crew members be important for 42 minutes, but then nothing ever became of them, either.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 7:27pm

I vaguely remember an episode that involve a lot of running back and forth between two planets. Kirk and Spock were beaming down, beaming back up. At one point Checkoff ask Sulu what's going on. Sulu says "Don't ask me. I just work here."

For the five hundred crew we see bouncing off the walls during a red alert there would be many 'What the Hell' moments.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 7:45pm

I sure as hell don't want to be known as an apologist for Space Hippies, but "The Way To Eden" did have an interesting premise that was completely (and laughably) botched. DC Fontana wrote the original script, with McCoy's daughter as one of the hippies and Kirk starting up a flirtation with her. Fontana took her name off the script before it was filmed. Like Snugglesaurus Rex says in an above thread, by the third season they didn't seem to have anyone around who understood scriptwriting and script doctoring.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 8:01am

The Voyager episode was called Good Shepard, and I quite liked it because Janeway fails - she tries to do the right, Starfleet-y thing, and the ingrates from the lower decks still behave like a bunch of jerks. It's a shame it wasn't followed up on, but it's a decent enough episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 12:38pm

ON Enterprise they have to pass through an enormous space cloud and only the doctor can stay awake through the weeks it takes... Everyone else is put in suspended animation and he kind o walks around and looks at everyone while they're sleeping...

Otherwise the proposal sounds like those crappy kids books they ued to ahve before things got better (you lucky young whippersnappers!) where a good little boy woud get up, brush his teeth, eath the nutritious breakfast his mother had lovingly prepared, then bring an apple to school for the teacher...(blah, blah, blah).. ON the way home he trips and skins his knee, breaking the mother's day present his nice teacher had helped him make and complimented him on; He cries, but mom bandages her knee and gives it a kiss, and then tell him she loves his present ust the way it is and hangs it on the fridge. Even Dad complimented it when he got home;.. Then teeth and bed, after a good day for the good little boy.

Just substitute the NEnterprise for the boy and it's money in the bank!

[Reply](#)

- [MrExcitement](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 4:11pm

I vaguely remember an episode of TNG where Picard has a group of children to shepherd around himself and help him do something or other. Help?

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 4:42pm

There is no story without conflict.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 9:24am

New Versions

Which versions are you watching, Sometimes you use an image from one of the new ones, and occasionally you comment on the difference... Surely you're not watching both each time ("I am, and don't call me Shirley...")

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Richelieu Jr

6/26/09 10:16am

I watch the originals, but when I grab screencaps, I just take whatever looks cooler.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/26/09 12:10pm

Any opinion overall on the new ones? Worth watching?

If so, any particular ones to see/avoid?

I've got the original boxes, which are nice, but the amstering leaves a it to be desired, though I don't mind the sill FX for the most part...

Are they just cleaned up or totally replaced?

Anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Richelieu Jr

6/26/09 3:57pm

I've been watching the re-mastered editions on TV as they air, and I quite like them. The picture quality is remarkable for such an old show (and quite a bit better than many more modern shows since it was filmed and not taped)

Personally, I like the remastered FX, in particular all of the various bumper shots of the Enterprise. It's nice to see her orbiting the planet of the week in full HD glory as opposed to a grainy, washed out enterprise that barely looks better than the model enterprise I made as a child.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/26/09 8:27pm

I've got the newly remastered DVDs (but the BluRay option of offering both the Lucas or original versions is ideal), and I'm really pleased with them. On the older DVDs, they still did a good job of cleaning up the film, although the space sfx shots looked really beat up in contrast with remastered film, almost like they didn't bother to clean those up at all. I suppose that the Enterprise sfx opticals might have been used so often that they couldn't be cleaned up as well, I suppose. How do the original sfx shots look on the BluRays?

I HATE the idea of tinkering with older films to the point that they're actually altered, but the new CGI is very good (varies from episode to episode, but the majority of all the shots are just the Enterprise sailing by and those are crisp and convincing). The planet backdrops have been augmented too, and look great.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/27/09 12:54am

Wow, thanks guys!

Any suggestions as to which episodes look good and which don't? Or a slightly different take on the uestion, ones where it's improved or not? Distracting? (I love the detail about the different material for the shirts! i eat this shit up!)

Sounding lie I'm gonna be out a packet for the blu-Ray.. What did the versions set you back, if I may be so bold?

(sorry, in France everything's more expensive!)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/27/09 7:30pm

@Richelieu - This may be more detail than you need, but here's my experience.

Watched most of season one on-demand through Netflix (new cgi sfx) and some of the older (original sfx) DVDs. Hard to tell the true quality of the new sfx on the computer screen, though.

I avoid Wal-Mart, but they were the only ones in town that had the brand new remasters in stock, and they were comparatively very cheap. I think all three season sets might be technically out of print (here's hoping that when they re-issue them, they'll do the BluRay option of both old & new sfx). The 1st season is HD-DVD on one side of each disc,

regular DVD (new cgi sfx) on the other. The 2nd & 3rd seasons are regular DVD only (new cgi sfx). Each season (even the HD-DVD hybrid of season 1) was \$50.

From the ones I've watched from these sets (mostly just season 2 so far) the new cgi effects for embellishing planetscapes are seamless - for the most part, I couldn't point out "that's new!" Shots of Enterprise circling planets or whooshing by look really good, and fit in well with the actual film. It looks like they paid particular attention to "The Doomsday Machine" - the effects are great. On the other hand, the shuttlecraft in "Galileo 7" looks more like a computer game and isn't very convincing. So, it seems to be hit-or-miss on the quality of the new sfx...but mostly hit.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/27/09 7:57pm

Addendum to the above:

I picked these up only about a month ago, in the U.S., so stores near you might still have these on the shelf (right next to the baguettes and berets, probably). Then again, France is in a different "DVD region code", isn't it?

I've watched these DVDs on an old-school 32" Panasonic CRT TV. So, they may look even better on a fancy HD TV... or maybe worse. Same goes for the added clarity of BluRay - I suspect that the new cgi sfx (not to mention the original sfx) may suffer under the scrutiny of a high definition disc and display (then again, pretty much everything I've seen that way suffers, which is why I'm sticking with my old TV).

DVD Talk has a good rundown on the 2008 reissues:  
<http://www.dvdtalk.com/revi...>

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/29/09 7:40am

@meyer:

that's perfect, man, just the sort of info i was looking for. We've got them here now in region 2, a bit more expensive, so maybe i'll try on ebay...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:18am

Ahab

Good Ahabs:

- 1) Ahab
- 2) KHAAAAN!

Bad Ahabs:

- 1) Kirk
- 2) Picard

The think that makes an Ahab a good Ahab is that their obsession both leads to their downfall AND is their major personality trait. Every portion of Ahab's character was defined by the whale and (of course) Khan was a simple riff on that premise.

What I didn't like about this episode and HATED about the TNG movie where Picard obsesses about the Borg (damn you Alfr eWoodard!) is that the obsession is a switch- these guys are normal people most of the time but Look Out! Its that smell! Its the Borg! Now my character changes entirely to be obsessed.

I just didn't find either to be very convincing.

[Reply](#)

- [The Shredder](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 11:48am

Picard had that sense of smell...that intuition.

[Reply](#)

- [BookshopBoy](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 12:15pm

He just smelled of the spice melange.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 12:18pm

Picard was still obsessed with getting revenge on the Borg before the TNG movie. The reason you didn't see that side of him often was because TNG didn't use the Borg every other episode. I do see your point though- Picard never decides to send the Enterprise out into reaches unknown hoping to find the Borg and fight them. But the way I see it (and, if you read some of the novels, what the character feels) is that Picard doesn't need to go looking for the Borg- he knows they'll be coming back, and he can get his revenge then.

Oh, and just for fun: "The line must be drawn HEAH!"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 1:22pm

I didn't want to get all political in my original post, but it occurred to me that George W. made a pretty good Ahab, under my criteria.

Ahabs make lousy presidents.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:15pm

Yeah, apologies, but this is all wrong. Obsessive is perhaps too strong, but Picard was always pretty fixated on various things: archaeology, music, the Prime Directive, etc. He was always introverted and internal, and while he was introspective I don't think it was too out of character for him to become fixated, to the point of obsession, with beating the Borg. It's true that he didn't do it in the "I, Borg" episode in TNG, when he had the chance, but the situation was different and his better angels kicked in. In First Contact, the Borg being on the ship (rather than on some planet somewhere) shifted his priorities a bit.

It worked for me, I suppose. And I don't care how much that "You broke your little ships" scene is, I love it and I always will!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 7:28pm

Another good Ahab is Matt Decker in "The Doomsday Machine". And it's funny that the end of "Obsession" recalls the end of Doomsday so clearly - the music, the fact that Kirk is standing at the brink of death staring down the approaching vampire cloud, calmly talking into his communicator, waiting to be beamed up, when...the transporter malfunctions!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 7:28am



Maybe it's a movie thing with Picard - his reaction in the previous film, Generations, to his nephew being burned to death in a fire, seemed massively out of proportion as well (at the end of Best Of Both Worlds, having been taken apart by the Borg he's back sipping tea and working, the kid dies in Generations and he bolts to his quarters for a heart-to-heart with Troi).

BTW Zach, when you finish with TOS, do the other four movies you haven't got stuck into yet, just to complete the TOS set!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 2:44pm

Prole-

Thanks for bringing up the nephew thing. THAT always smacked of script rewriting to me- "Hey, we need Picard to have an emotional hook so the audience can relate. Hmm. Maybe he had a relative who recently died. Yeah! That's it! Write that in and then give him a backstory that gives us the impression he actually cared about this person. Have someone in research find some reference to family in the show!"

Kinda like Kirk's brother being killed by the slime parasites in that episode a few weeks back.

One of the things that really bugged me about the TNG movies is it seemed they always were trying to add new backstory instead of recognizing they had 7 SEASONS of material to rely on.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [El Santo](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 1:00pm

Wolf in the Fold vs. the TNG ep with Riker on trial

The original series wins. The TNG ep was mind-numbingly boring, since it was a standard revenge plot and the holodeck scenes were sub-soap opera.

"Wolf in the Fold" somehow ended with "Jack the Ripper did it." That's INSANE.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)El Santo

6/25/09 3:24pm

"Picard shouldn't have a Ready Room—more like a Drawing Room."

Or an Accusing Parlor, perhaps?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

6/25/09 3:30pm

@ Hey-

Refresh me as to what the season 2 "clip show" was about. I don't remember any clip show, and I've seen all of TNG on DVD.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

6/25/09 4:15pm

This sounds so outside the realm of possibility, I will go home and watch it tonight.

[Reply](#)

- [daveshayne](#)El Santo

6/25/09 4:27pm

It's this one perhaps.

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)El Santo

6/25/09 4:45pm

Riker has some injury or disease and the only way he can recover is for his brain to show him clips of previous episodes. You might remember that framing story, though it's not very memorable.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

6/25/09 4:52pm

I'll be damned.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)El Santo

6/26/09 12:41pm

"Picard shouldn't have a Ready Room—more like a Drawing Room so everyone can hear how he solved the case."

Brilliant!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)El Santo

6/26/09 8:51pm

That makes sense.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)El Santo

6/27/09 12:40pm

Economic sense, perhaps, but not good craftsmanship. It'd be much better just to scrap the last episode and do a rerun. Reruns only last an hour and then they are gone in the ether. Clip shows survive forever, permanently besmerching their creators' good names.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:20am

Leper Pirates

I think this ground was covered in Voyager with the Vidiians who, suffering from the deadly Phage, pirate themselves onto your ship to steal your organs.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:21pm

Which were one of Voyager's coolest aliens, in terms of concept if not execution. I think a huge problem with Voyager was that it was basically unimaginative—lots of the episodes were ripoffs of earlier ST series' stories, when they weren't ripping off earlier Voyager stories, and the fact that we spent several seasons with the Kazon and those trash-dumping people showed the ultimate problem with the show—lame ideas with half-assed follow-up. That show was indeed the nadir of Star Trek.

Admittedly, Species 8472 were cool, and the Hirogen grew on me—at first I didn't like them because I thought they were just a new version of the Klingons, then they were developed to be more interesting, and finally they turned out to be basically low-rent Klingons again by the end.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 4:36pm

Hey! Gimme back my spleen!

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 4:41pm

TOS and DS9. TNG is an overrated smarm-fest. Seriously, I find it almost impossible to get through an episode of that show without hurting my back from all the cringing. At least the datedness of TOS is fun.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 7:30pm

Right on the money, edked.

Except "Enterprise" was a lot of fun, and Avery Brooks' acting was so bad that DS9 drops several notches as a result.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 10:30pm

Avery Brooks overacts like the oak tree in my backyard. In fact, he acts like an oak tree was shoved up his ass.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 7:37am

Another week, another "which is worst" conversation, another time I have to defend Voyager. \*sigh\*

The Viidians WERE cool, by the the best of the "recurring Delta quadrant" baddies (and infinitely better than the awful, awful Kazon, who were just low-rent Klingons - and I'm excepting Species 8472 from this because they didn't originate in the Delta quadrant).

I think the painful truth is that all five series are flawed in some ways (TOS is cheesy, TNG is smug, DS9 dull, Voyager is repetitive, Enterprise is stilted) but despite, or maybe because of, these flaws, we love them all the same. Best captain? Kirk. Best actor? Patrick Stewart. Best exploration of alien society? Cardassians (or maybe Bajorans). Best Borg? Seven of Nine. Most realistic? Enterprise. (as much as any of it is, erm, realistic). Take your pick!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 1:03pm

Keep going MAtterEaterLad, and soon you'll be one of us few, proud, Enterprise fans.

It only gets better, and the last seasons are quite good indeed. They even get rid of the singing on that awful, awful excuse for a prom song (I actually attended an evangelical Christian wedding where that song was played, (and sung!!!) by the Bride and Groom during the ceremony and the Preacher had to give a sermon on why Star Trek couldn't replace real religion! Why?\*)

Anyways, I subscribe to the theory that all the series besides TOS were crap for the first 3 seasons... (well, besides Enterprise, too)..

\*(because it implies man can perfect himself without God's help, duh!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [udjibbom](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 6:48pm

a request

what about pairing up TOS "Trouble with Tribbles" and the DS9 "Trials and Tribulations" episodes? not just to nerd-out about whether or not all the background shit matches ['cause it obviously doesn't] but mainly just to shed some light on how great DS9 was.

and i always thought that paramount SHOULD have pulled a lucas and inserted all the DS9 extras into the hdef remasters of TOS - why not?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)udjibbom

6/25/09 7:52pm

Agree that the DS9 Tribbles should be covered. It's even paired up as a bonus feature on the newest TOS DVDs. The way they were able to seamlessly insert the DS9 characters into the original footage still blows my mind.

The idea of putting the DS9 crew into any of the TOS eps is blasphemy, although it would have been fun (although impossible) to use the older versions of the actors for an alternate version of "The Deadly Years".

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)udjibbom

6/26/09 4:58am

Oops - seems like HDBs think alike...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)udjibbom

6/26/09 12:18pm

I gotta vote for those TOS uniforms looking nice on the ladies.

Didn't Enterprise have some stuff that ties in as well (besides the alternate reality thingy).

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)udjibbom

6/26/09 8:01pm

@Richelieu

Like the set design, music, etc. the women's "uniforms" of short skirts and boots are another iconic quality of the original series. It wouldn't be Trek without them, stirring the blood of young (and middle-aged) viewers every week. And the actresses cast were beautiful and stacked almost without exception. I'm guessing the Eugenics Wars were partially waged against us less attractive people.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)udjibbom

6/27/09 12:57am

Yeah, I imagine Khan and Comany would have given me the axe long ago...

I just noticed I'm growing hair on my butt, for chrissakes! Is there no end to these middle-aged humiliations?!!!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Natural Join](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 12:58pm

Pi doesn't have a last digit

Pi doesn't have a last digit. So the computer should have rejected the request as nonsensical. Also, if the Enterprise's computer can be disabled just by running a CPU-bound job, then it's less sophisticated than Windows 2000.

Sigh. Being both a Star Trek nerd and a CS nerd is tiring. Where's my Orion slave girl?

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)Natural Join

6/25/09 1:21pm

Yes, but would the computer have been programmed with the knowledge that "Pi is an irrational number"? And even if it had, it still could have parsed the command as. "Calculate next digit of Pi. Repeat until terminating or repeating sequence is encountered."

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Natural Join

6/25/09 2:03pm

Just to bring this full circle, not only did I watch "Wolf in the Fold" last night, I followed it up by watching Afronsky's "Pi." I'm thinking of giving away my power drills, just in case.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Natural Join

6/26/09 12:42pm

Bad nerd, no slave girl for you!

(now will you please come over and help me reboot my MAC?)

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)Natural Join

6/26/09 2:31pm

That pi can be so irrational... never listens to reason, always going on and on...

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)Natural Join

6/26/09 4:35pm

Spock: Computer. This is a Class-A compulsory directive. Compute, to the last digit, the value of pi.

The computer is fully capable of multi-tasking, but part of the command is to dedicate all resources to the task.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:25am

I don't think love would be much help in resolving four way intersections

I'm pretty sure I saw a movie once that was exactly about this premise.

Well, "movie" is perhaps a strong term. Let's say "video" and leave it at that.

I've said too much.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 3:36pm

That's me in the corner. That's me in the spotlight. Losing my religion.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 12:51pm

I don't remember an intersection in that video...

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 4:28pm

I think you were watching the wrong video. But I'm not sure that four-way was ever really "resolved".

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/26/09 8:30pm

It was resolved to my satisfaction.

Oh, dear, I've said too much again.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/27/09 1:02am

Four ways are never really resolved, they just sort of peter out...

(though the ladies tend to keep going for some reason... Don't they know that I'm the star and when I'm finished, they should be too? Kids today...!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Scurrilous Lies Abound](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:11am

I wish I hadn't already registered  
because "Vampire-Based Hitler" is an excellent, excellent username.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound

6/25/09 11:29am

Do Vampire-based Hitlers have bees in their mouths and when they bark they shoot bees at you?

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound

6/25/09 11:38am

No, they have mouths full of little tiny Hitlers, and when they bark the little tiny Hitlers fly out and bite you.

Still, less fearsome than the robotic Richard Simmons!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound

6/25/09 8:38pm

Just so long as neither of them have to wear a silver bikini.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound

6/26/09 1:06pm

..And they have a retractable leg so they can jump over you and they've got magnets on it, in case you're made out of metal!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 2:19pm

Next week: jump the shark?

The next two episodes are my next nomination for the true jump-the-shark moment in the original series. Not there weren't cheesy episodes before (eg Alternative Factor or The Apple), or half-decent episodes after (eg Ultimate Computer). But an episode written to be comedy/farce, followed the next by a pure camp episode in which Adam West in costume would not have seemed out-of-place; I'm not sure the series ever recovered.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)JimZipCode

6/26/09 4:03pm

OK, I can understand the Tribble hate - they seem to be Star Trek's Ewoks to some people. but no episode that features a knock down drag out klingon bar brawl can be all bad. And Gamesters is a classic Trek episode Kirk kicks ass via both dramatic monologue and exotic fighting. What's not to like about that?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode

6/26/09 8:43pm

@Mr. ZipCode - Several of us are going away for the weekend and we've beamed all of our tribbles into your home. Come on, that's a great episode.

Mostly agree with you on "Gamesters", although I haven't seen it in years and am hoping Mr. Hercules is right and that it's as over-the-top as I remember and I can just say, "Screw it...I'm in...75 Quatloos on the alien in the ridiculous hat."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode

6/27/09 12:51am

Tin foil bikinis are the tits. End of line.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 8:20pm

Wolf in the Fold

Robert "Catspaw/Wolf in the Fold" Bloch's work on Trek doesn't exactly make me want to run out and read "Psycho". Is that book any good, or is this guy just a hack?

One missed opportunity was the intriguing idea of a hedonistic Playboy Mansion planet where emotions like jealousy are outlawed (but still exist). I mean, your fiancée is encouraged to screw anyone she meets and you're not supposed to be bothered by that? It could've been used as a parallel to the Vulcans suppressing their emotions to maintain civil order. Throwing a murderer into that situation has great possibilities, but it's squandered on the "Scotty! You have to remember!" plotline.

On the plus side, the Pi thing was pretty cool.

A couple of other fun observations: One fear-eating alien shows up and they start handing out heroin to the entire crew. Also, when the trial of "I can turn the lights out and carve up a woman at any time" Scotty/Rejac resumes aboard the Enterprise, they have a woman stenographer taking notes! Not prudent.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer

6/26/09 12:16pm

'Psycho' is OK, rather dry for the pulp it's advertised as, and very, very different from the film. I was quite disappointed by it as a lad, but read it about ten years ago and enjoyed it. His ideas are generally better than the execution, but he has a dry, straightforward way of relating things and the structures are usually sound. Give him a spin. He's like a less-good Richard Matheson, for my money, but far from bad.

It seems to me I've seen your 'playboy planet' idea somewhere, but I'm not sure where. Certainly there are elements of it in 'Brave New World' by Huxley... Arguably even in 1984, though that's one Playboy Mansion I do not want to celebrate the new year in!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

6/26/09 8:09pm

I was just coining the phrase "Playboy Planet" to describe what Bloch has going on in the setting of this episode. It would probably be a good description for Dr. Strangelove's planned War Room Bunker, though!

Good to hear Bloch's reputation is better than what these Trek scripts would indicate.

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 5:38pm

Were this world an endless plain...

"...most of us don't own whaling ships (sigh)...."

That (sigh) made me fall a little bit in love with you, Zack.

Assuming, that is, that your wistfulness is related to the romance and adventure of sailing the high seas, and not, you know, stabbing large mammals with harpoons until they shoot blood from their blowholes.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/26/09 12:19pm

Wait a minute, that last sentence made me fall in love a little bit with you, Julie (in spite of your annoying US accent)!

Clearly we've been watching similar porn recently!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/27/09 10:02pm

And "nauseated," not "nauseous." Unless he smells bad.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Julie Delpys Lipstick

6/27/09 10:03pm

That should have gone under comment below.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 8:36pm

Obsession...For Captains

A couple of additional fun observations on "Obsession":

Nobody seems to like Nurse Chapel's cooking, do they?



They never attempt to communicate with the vampire cloud, which is just trying to have a nice, quiet dinner. I'd love to see the Chicken Planet Armada try to take out the Enterprise as a matter of self-defense (and no, I'm not a vegetarian - I just like irony).

When Garrovick shows up and Kirk asks him, "So, you're the newest Security guard?", I imagine the rest of the bridge crew immediately looking uncomfortable and avoiding all eye contact with him.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer

6/26/09 12:12pm

When I was in high school I wrote a story about giant space plants coming to earth because they'd heard the genocide of all the American lawns screaming in unison as each blade was cut down...

Hey, it could happen! (And anyways, I was young, I needed the money...!)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

6/26/09 8:13pm

Makes me feel much better about neglecting my yardwork for the past couple of weeks.

And M. Night Shyamalan is probably pounding his forehead into his desk right now yelling, "Of course! Giant space plants! Why didn't I think of that?!"

[Reply](#)

- [AnglScarlett](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:52am

Garrovick

"We've never seen Garrovick before, we'll never see him again"

That was really a shame. He was the best looking male guest star they ever had. A really prime piece.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)AnglScarlett

6/26/09 12:50pm

Forsooth!

This is just the kind of objectification of us men that has got to stop! We're not just slabs of meat! I honestly would have expected the Onion AV Cdub to be a more enlightened place than this! Please cancel my subscription, for ever, and also remove the memory of having watched the Onion movie from my brain.

Signed,

A Really Ugly Little Man

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)AnglScarlett

6/26/09 7:50pm

To Garrovick's credit, as a security officer he's professional and handles the debriefing with Captain Jerk in an intelligent and matter-of-fact manner. Unlike most of the guards, who usually stand there looking stupid (those who live long enough to stand around a bit, anyway).

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 9:23am

## Shooting Out of Order

The continuity error with the RedShirt you speak of sounds more like an error of syndication to me, or a network decision...

And BTW, what's with the original box-sets numbering? The episodes seem to come out of order, or maybe they're organized according to some futuristic system which eludes me... IS it in order of how they were originally shown (see error above)? Or have they been put back in the 'original' sequence? A new one? Which one are you following?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

6/27/09 2:48pm

Thanks, pouraewu!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

6/27/09 8:36pm

As a nice feature, the menus of each of the 2008 DVDs has the episode playback ordered by broadcast, but each one has a notation of the actual production order of each episode next to it, so it should be easy to watch them in whatever order you choose. I'm assuming the new BluRay for Season 1 does this too.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 3:08pm

Spock manages to drive the ghost out of the machine by setting the computer to calculate pi "to the last digit."

Reminds me of the book Solaris, in which the protagonist proves that he's not hallucinating by making complicated planetary orbit calculations that he wouldn't have been able to do in his head after asking the computer for the answer, and if they were different he'd know he was hallucinating (or very lucky). One of the coolest parts of the book, IMO.

Sci-fi needs more math-centric plot devices, in my opinion.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Eponymous

6/25/09 3:46pm

Nothing like building dramatic tension than complex math problems.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

6/26/09 12:20pm

Hey, wait a minute! Nobody told me math would be required!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

6/25/09 11:11am

In a spirit of helpfulness (Zach)

Shouldn't it be "like the cloud we saw on Argus!" ?

When I first read the line I thought you were being snarky "Why, that's just like that cloud to do that thing. That's what we say!"

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/25/09 11:27am

Fixed, thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) John barleycorn must diet

6/27/09 1:10am

"Zack Handlen: Cloud Handler"

On the next episode of ZHCH, Zach had to lasso a nasty cumulous which ahs been showing signs of precipitation on a dangerous desert slope... Will he be able to seed the cloud himself (viewer discretion is advised), or will his nemesis Chip Dangler show him up once again in front of the lovely Dido? He's certainly lassoed more than his share of sky sheep, but if Dangler's new meterological radar shows that his last encounter with a low-hanging stratus cloud with udder-like ridges resulted in a little scudder, will Dido stick around?

Zack is Back!

[Reply](#)

- [ka9q](#) Zack Handlen

9/09/14 5:11pm

I think Wolf in the Fold deserves a better rating. Sure, it has many of the problems that Zack mentions, but it is redeemed by a great ending. It is far more common to see a great premise and setup followed by a disappointing payoff.

And this one has so many great lines:

"I've never heard a malfunction threaten us before."

"Whoever he is, he sure talks gloomy!"

"You better be careful, you're gonna hurt somebody with that thing!"

"Die...die...! Kill...(giggle)...kill (chuckle) you all...!"

But didn't it occur to Kirk just how dangerous a starship operated by a crew completely under the influence might be? Didn't he remember "The Naked Time?"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen

6/26/09 12:24pm

Drink the Durgs, I pray Thee!

I relmember reading somewhere that in the bar scene in 'Wolf' they were supposed to be drinking long, colourful drinks which would be divided into different layers, blue, red, green, yello... Each colour would correspond to different emotion, so they'd all get sad at the same time, then happy, then energetic, etc...

The studio said "No dice, this is the '60's!"\* and they'll think we're promoting psychedelics... I always loved that idea, though. Very much of its time in the best way...

\*(Not necessarily in those exact words)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#) Zack Handlen

6/26/09 2:15pm

Confronting the captain

Obsession has a nice scene where Spock & McCoy confront Kirk about what he's doing. It could have been played for melodrama, and instead Kirk & Spock banter the regulation manner of addressing the captain, and then Kirk comes clean. It really feels like a moment where true professionals who know & trust & respect each other, sit down to hammer out their differences. Well done.

Lots of scenes get cut / truncated in syndication, this might be one of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Caravelle](#)Zack Handlen

3/07/13 12:59pm

In "Wolf" I love how Spock theorizes about the alien killing women because they are easier to scare, and then it cuts to a long shot with a female officer writing things down and looking annoyed. I don't know what the intention was but I choose to believe she's internally rolling her eyes at Spock's sexist bullshit.

(of course that would suggest the women in this show aren't actually aliens, which puts my whole interpretation of that universe in jeopardy)

[Reply](#)

- [Conscience\\_of\\_a\\_conservative](#)Zack Handlen

3/10/17 5:37pm

Having been a huge star trek fan for years i'm starting to re-evaluate deciding that most of the best scripts were in season one with a few in season 2. Time allows even a fan to re-evaluate in a colder more analytical light.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 9:09am

Good Rocks

"the Enterprise, in addition to its other duties, is always on the hunt for good rocks.) A sweet odor fills the air.."

Sounds like South-Central LA to me, maybe Echo Park?

[Reply](#)

- [Hemingway's Shotgun](#)Zack Handlen

8/23/16 11:56pm

Watching Obsession and the direction is phenomenal. Shades of the Searchers; that scene where McCoy visits Kirk in his quarters and everything is red is phenomenal.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 4:57am

Hey Zack

How about covering the DS9 crossover episode ("Trials and Tribble-ations") when you cover the "Trouble with Tribbles"?

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/07/16 12:11am

What about the return of the "there's a place where the women are so... " joke at the end? Most awkward ending in the whole series?

[Reply](#)

- [rimbaud](#)Zack Handlen

6/09/12 8:37am

Some terrific acting in Obsession from the three principals.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

6/26/09 9:07am

Lennon

Nice Beatles reference there, matey!

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Trouble With Tribbles" / "The Gamesters Of Triskelion"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published July 2, 2009

[Comments \(147\)](#)



Did you know there was a commemorative plate made for the original *Trek*? Probably more than one, I guess, but the one I remember had Kirk in a pile of tribbles, in a painting inspired by one of the series' most iconic scenes. I've never understood the appeal of commemorative plates, and I'm not sure anybody actually does; I think it's one of those things they sell on TV that doesn't have a reason to exist, but costs money so we assume it's worthwhile. Like Chia Pets or trailers for *Transformers 2*. (Okay, I guess the trailers have a point, because how else would we know that Megan Fox is still a functional delivery system for both T and A?) But that damn *Trek* plate haunts me. It's ridiculous to the point of being sublime. I can imagine some blue-haired old lady out in Iowa having it in her china hutch, right next to a Santa Claus head mug and her Spoons of the World collection.

"The Trouble With Tribbles" is one of *Star Trek's* successful forays into comedy, and while I have a few reservations, it holds up well. I mean, they don't make plates about *Voyager* episodes, right? (God, what a terrible way to diet: punishing yourself every time you finish a meal.) Shatner normally gets stuck playing the straight man whenever wackiness happens, and "Tribbles" is no exception to the rule; he seems to be having more fun than usual with the premise, though, and some of his reaction shots here are Nimoy-level hysterical. Kirk's growing frustration and bemusement could've come off as smug, but it doesn't. Instead, he sets the tone for the entire episode; playful, often silly, with just enough of a grounded storyline to keep from floating away completely.

We open with Kirk, Spock, and Chekov having a chat about Sherman's Planet, a nearby locale that's currently the subject of dispute between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. (Who aren't officially at war. Looks like the Organian interference back in "An Errand of Mercy" held.) It's been a mildly irritating running gag that Chekov likes to claim that everything in the universe was created by the Russians, and we get a couple more of those gags in "Tribbles," neither of which are funny. Thankfully, the info-dump is cut short by an emergency distress signal from Deep Space Station K-7. The *Enterprise* moves to respond and learns that the signal was a slight over-reaction, made by the latest in our on-going series of Administrative Assholes, Nilz Baris.

See, Baris (played by William Schallert, who, according to his IMDB page, has been in everything, and some of it twice) has this special grain, called quadrottricale, and it's the only stuff that grows on Sherman's Planet. So it's vitally important that the grain makes it there. (I'm not sure why the Enterprise can't just transport it themselves. Maybe they don't have the right storage units?) Given the planet's tenuous diplomatic status, any problems could mean disaster for the Federation, and Baris used the distress signal to get Kirk to come by so he could order Kirk to put guards on the grain bins. Kirk's not real happy about this, but the word comes down from Starfleet that he's stuck at the station. Might as well make the best of it by letting the crew take some much needed shore leave.

One of the reasons "Tribbles" works is that, even though we're dealing with another tedious bureaucrat, we never feel like Kirk is stuck under the creep's thumb. He makes no attempt to hide his contempt for Baris, and since we're firmly on his side (even if Baris's complaints are legitimate, the guy is a total tool), that makes his encounters with the Man actually fun for a change. The way the episode unfolds means Kirk's constantly dealing with things he doesn't really want to deal with, and there's a surprising amount of enjoyment to be had in seeing him complain about it to Spock.

And then there are the title characters. Uhura and Chekov run into them while hanging out on the station bar. (On her leave, Uhura wants to go "shopping." Ah, women!) A con-man named Cyrano Jones is trying his best to sell the bartender a fuzzy little purring mound. Uhura is instantly smitten; Spock later theorizes that the sound the tribbles make has a calming effect on humans, so I guess that's why everybody gets such a kick out of them, but they're mostly just pet rocks minus the personality. Cyrano gives Uhura a tribble, and Chekov has time to notice it eating some quadrottricale he spilled on the table (foreshadowing!)(that the tribble was eating grain, not that Chekov spilled or noticed anything) before we move on to the next scene.

Cyrano's my least favorite part of the episode; I know some folks expressed surprise at my fondness for Harry Mudd, but Cyrano to me just points to how well Carmel fit into the show. Stanley Adams doesn't get as much screentime as Mudd might've, but for those times he *is* in our focus, he's mugging it up fierce, doing all sorts of facial expressions that I assume are supposed to be comic but aren't. The bar-fight at the ep's midpoint is broken up by lots of cutting to Cyrano doing business over at the bar, and it makes the scene go on for ages. The character is never enough a part of the story to matter, and while his comeuppance isn't bad, you kind of wonder why anyone cares to punish him. It's a waste of a name that should've been bad-ass. (Like, what if Casey Jones had a cousin? And his cousin was into being a vigilante, only he'd watched a lot of theater, so he, um... Okay, moving on.)

But hey, that bar-fight? It happens because the Klingons arrive, and, per the usual, they're up to no good. Hell, the Squire of Gothos is with them! Not literally, but the actor who played the Squire, William Campbell, plays Koloth, captain of the Klingon ship. (Because I'm a nerd, I like to think that Koloth really *is* Trelane, and that this is just something his parents did to make him learn humility, or because he banged up the space car or got some star skank pregnant. And the reason Kirk doesn't recognize him? He's wearing a cunning goatee.) Koloth demands that he and his men be allowed to have some fun time on the space station like everybody else—apparently, Klingons don't travel with their own entertainment, like porn or board games—and Kirk reluctantly agrees. This is bound to turn out poorly, since a dozen or so of the *Enterprise* crew are already wandering around.

The build-up to the fight is decent, with Scotty telling Chekov to ignore a series of insults to Kirk from Koloth's second-in-command, only to lose his shit when the guy starts ragging on the *Enterprise*, but the best part of the whole thing is the aftermath, with Kirk questioning his men as to who started the fight, and then dragging the whole story out of an embarrassed Scotty. The timing here is terrific, and it's one of the few times on the show when having a character describe something that we've all just seen actually works; Kirk's slightly disappointed reaction in learning that he got insulted, and that no one came to his defense, is hilarious.

During all of this, the tribbles have started to multiply, and once they start, they don't stop. Another great thing about "Trouble" is the way the tribbles pop up everywhere, to the point where they're dominating the bridge and even getting into the food supply. It's a sight gag that never stops working, and it gains steam as it goes. McCoy does some tests and determines that nearly half of a tribble's energies are devoted to reproduction. And as Spock points out, without their natural predators, there's nothing to keep their growth in check. Everybody's still charmed by their constant purring, but something's going to have to be done, and soon.

Apart from Cyrano Jones, "Trouble" has a light touch, and it's one of the better scripts we've seen. Writer David Gerrold provides a couple of through lines—the importance of the grain that Kirk was called in to protect, and the rapid population growth of the tribbles—but never puts too much stress on either of them. Generally I prefer my *Trek* episodes with some danger to them, and there's really nothing like that here; you never worry that the Klingons are going to shoot anybody, or that the tribbles are going to go mogwai. But it works, because the casualness isn't sloppy. When Kirk opens the storage bin and gets buried under a mound of dead (and near dead) hairballs, it's an a-ha moment, without ever needing to be stressed; the story comes together in a delightfully laid-back fashion, like a long form joke that's really more an anecdote than something with a punchline.

So the Klingons were up to their usual tricks, tainting the grain with a poison that would make anyone who ate unable to get full (there's something wonderfully dark about that; the most memorable moment of "Trouble" comes from Kirk standing in a pile of cute aliens that starved to death), and they've got an inside man in the form of Baris's assistant, a Klingon passing as human. He's discovered when a tribble freaks out at him. Tribbles don't like Klingons, which leads to another amusingly dark bit when we learn that Scotty's beamed every tribble on the *Enterprise* over to the Klingon ship's engine room. Ha-ha, all those pets we loved are going to be slaughtered by our enemies! (It's weird that it's that easy to beam stuff into the Klingons' engine room. Does that mean the Klingons could return the favor? Is anybody checking the pipes?)

If "Trouble" works largely because of its easy-going nature, "The Gamesters of Triskelion" serves as a reminder of why that nature was so refreshing. On the plus side, I finally get all those "200 quatloos on the newcomer!" jokes, and the costumes are amusingly ridiculous. Uhura gets to do a little more than usual; between this and "Trouble," it's sort of a banner week for her. I dug Spock's efforts to track down Kirk, Uhura, and Chekov after they disappear, too. Unlike other episodes, the scenes on the *Enterprise*, while not exactly relevant to the plot, don't come off as wasted time. Also, there are colored throbbing brains under glass, and that counts for a lot.

On the minus side, well... Let's get through the story first. Kirk, Uhura, and Chekov are all about to beam down to do some repair work on a communication station. ("Communi-ation station, what's your... Haitian.") Things get weird when they step onto the transporter; instead of winding up in the usual grey-sand-and-purple-rocks set, they're snatched mid-beam and set down on the planet Triskelion. Triskelion has its own share of purple rocks, but it also has a fighting arena, "thralls" (aka slaves), a master thrall, and a bunch of disembodied voices that like telling Kirk how spirited he is. Nothing can ever be easy, I guess.

Kirk and the rest have been recruited to take part in the Triskelion fighting games; they'll be trained, sold to the highest bidder, and then pitted against other slaves for the disembodied voices' (called "Providers") amusement. Since it's hard for a disembodied voice to train anyone (there's not a lot of local news, so nobody's got a paper to hit Kirk on the nose with when he's been bad), the Providers use other thralls to get the job done. There's Lars, a barbarian type who's a little too into the whole thing; an orange-skinned woman who takes a strong interest in Chekov (we're talking "death by snu-snu" strong); and Shahna, a green-haired hottie in a tinfoil diaper who latches on to Kirk. There's also a caveman, but nobody really talks to him, and in the end he gets a spear in his stomach.

All of the thralls, as well as our heroes, have to wear special collars around their neck; the collars show proof of ownership (once a thrall is sold, part of the collar changes color to indicate who that thrall's owner is—fittingly enough, the colors match up with the colors of the brains we see at the end), and they also allow the Providers to deal out punishment as needed. This kind of thing always freaks me out. There's a part in *The Great Hunt*, the second book of Robert Jordan's *Wheel Of Time* series, where a magic user named Egwene gets captured by the Seanchan, a race that hates magic. They stick a collar on her called an *a'dam* (I had to look up the names on this stuff, but I felt bad that I had to look it up, so I guess I don't lose all my nerd-cred); the *a'dam* lets them read her mood and make her suffer horribly if she does anything they don't like.

I found myself thinking about that collar during "Gamesters." Say what you will about Jordan's writing, but I remember the *a'dam* stuff being incredibly harsh, a nightmarish portrayal of slavery so complete that it offers no distance between slave and master; Egwene couldn't even hide in her own mind without those fuckers knowing it. "Gamesters" doesn't

come close to that kind of ugliness. It's not really the episode's fault that I never felt that concerned for Kirk's well-being. He gets zapped a couple of times—they all do—and Shahna gets it pretty bad when she's caught falling for Kirk's charms, but it was all too damn goofy to really get worked up over. Part of the awfulness of the *a'dam* is that's controlled by a whole race that thinks they're doing the right thing. Kirk gives the standard Big Speech about how awful slavery is, but we don't see enough of Triskelion civilization to really feel what he's saying; slavery needs a society to uphold it. Without that, it's just an S&M party where everybody forgot the safe word at the same time.

"Kirk putting the moves on Shahna" was tedious even without the speechifying. She's instantly smitten with him—sure, she puts up a good front, but she's definitely got that "I am intrigued by you, man-animal, so I'll be all snooty" vibe. Kirk uses her to try and get himself and the others freed, and then he ditches her at the end without so much as a hug. He's managed to free her people, and even got a promise from the Providers that they'll teach the released thralls how to provide for themselves, but when she asks to go along with him on the *Enterprise* to see the stars, he's all, "Oooo, right, about that—hey, I'll maybe, maybe I'll call you? Like, in a few weeks? I'm moving, and I gotta get settled in first. And there was this thing, with this guy... It's complicated. You're too good for me, really. You're better off with that bald guy in the robe who used to torture you."

The whole Triskelion system never really coheres. The brains in charge all evolved beyond the need for bodies (note: evolution does not work that way), and they're bored because being a brain under glass isn't the most exciting thing in the world to be, especially when the cable goes out. So these brains (aka, the Providers) have set up a system where they snatch people from other races and planets and make them fight, and they bet money on the fights to make it exciting. Nothing wrong with that, and I'm as big a fan of talking brains as the next guy, but it's like one of those standard sci-if "outs," isn't it? You've got a weird premise, so it's either EARTH ALL ALONG or some kind of god-like being (let's face it, physical appearance aside, these are your standard god-like beings) is responsible.

There's this freaky scene where Lars comes in to Uhura's room and they go off camera and Uhura starts screaming; you think he's trying to rape her, and you're pretty sure nothing happens, but it's an all-too-real moment in an otherwise campy episode. It doesn't help that Chekov's interactions with the orange-skinned woman (too many carrots?) are played entirely for laughs.

I'd say "Gamesters" ranks around average, maybe a little below, and how much you enjoy it depends on how much of a kick you get out of the goofy outfits and goofier dialogue. There is a solid three-on-one fight at the climax to save the *Enterprise* and everyone on it; the rules are unclear, though, because while we're told that Kirk can't step out of the yellow area without losing a weapon, he steps out of it constantly and nothing bad happens. Also, at the end, he wins by making Shahna surrender, and seeing as how they were sort of on the same side (even though she was pissed at him), I can't help thinking the brains got shafted. After the fight, the last thing we see is Shahna making a tearful promise about finding a way to go after Kirk, and it's played very serious, as though she'd decided to quit smoking and discover raider or something. It's enjoyable ridiculous, but not actually good.

#### **Grades:**

**"The Trouble With Tribbles": A**

**"The Gamesters Of Triskelion": B-**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- The suggestions about covering *Deep Space Nine's* excellent "Tribbles" riff, "Trials and Tribble-ations" were solid. I just didn't have a chance to get the *DS9* ep before this week, because I am very lazy. I have failed you as a reviewer, and as a human being. Also as a career balloonist, but that's not really relevant here.
- Kirk's best Baris put down: "I think of this project as very important. It's you I take lightly."
- During Kirk's "training," he bitches about having to jog two miles without stopping. Ha! I can jog at least three miles without stopping, and I don't even have a green-haired babe in a shiny brassiere to keep me going.
- Some nice "Amok Time" theme action going on during "Gamesters."



## DISCUSSION

- Community (146)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Prole Hole](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 10:19am

Can you get better than Tribbles?

No, no you cant. A highlight of Season 2 and of course any season of any Star Trek. Wonderful writeup as always, Zach!

And although it's got much love round here, I've never been that big a fan of Gamesters. Better in the mind than in the reality - I'm actually quite pleased to see it get a B-, sounds about right to me. Also, Shatner at his most creepiest...

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 10:35am

I like 'em both, but I've got one questions - Who in the hell designed that upside down storage bin? How the hell did they get the quadrotriticale in there to begin with?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 10:43am

"Tribbles" has always been a favorite, because it is handled with a light touch. There are a couple of great little moments. When Koloth says that Klingon ships don't carry recreation, he moves his hands to shape a woman's figure. Or when Scotty says to the Klingon in the bar, "Laddie, don't ye think ye ought to rrephrrase that?", the Klingon tries a Scottish burr when he replies, "You'rre rright. I should."

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 10:51am

"Gamesters" is mostly a meh-level episode except for two things:

- 1) Shahna is hot. I saw a naked picture of her once in one of my dad's Playboys.
- 2) The episode gave us the immortal "I bet 200 quatloos!" phrase to add to our conversations.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 10:58am

Yup, you can't go wrong with tits and made-up currency! And the thing I love most about Tribbles is Spock's barely-concealed smirk throughout, as if he can't quite believe the idiocy that he's caught up in.

BTW Just zis guy, awesome name, avatar and Hitch-Hikers reference - +100 internets for you, my friend! You can be my shrink any day!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 11:50am

What I like about "Tribbles" is that, yes, it is a comedy episode, but it doesn't go off the deep end with the yuks. Like Zack said, there really is a dark element in it: Klingons were set to kill people through starvation. There are still some stakes involved.

Also, much admiration for the simplicity of the Tribbles design.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:20pm

What I want to know is WHAT ARE QUATLOOS AND WHAT CAN DISEMBODIED BRAINS DO WITH THEM?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:23pm

Thanks, Prole Hole! You're the first person to notice/mention the reference.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:29pm

Use them in betting for more quatloos, of course.

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 2:30pm

Saskatchewan is North America's Deep Space Station K-7.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 7:06pm

It's difficult to imagine disembodied brains needing any kind of currency. But brain hookers don't take credit (or the more common "credits"), apparently.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 8:26pm

Brain hookers? How does that work?

I guess we should ask Xenu...

[Reply](#)

- [much more cleverer than the po](#)Prole Hole

7/03/09 1:22am

I just watched Trouble with Tribbles for the first time. I'd heard about it plenty of times, of course.

Um, it's supposed to be funny? Is it a nostalgia thing? Kinda sat there stone-faced through the whole thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Prole Hole

7/03/09 9:07pm

Your face seems more potato-like than stony, much.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:04pm

Kirk, vis a vis Shahna

Seems like maybe Prole was touching on this below, but is Kirk way out of line to be hitting on a slave girl? Seems to be a bit much.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 12:26pm

Since he is a slave too, I think it's OK. Even if it weren't, he'd do it anyway.

Oh Captain Kirk, you sly horn-dog!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 12:29pm

Nah. She was in charge of his training, had the keys to the cell, and obviously wasn't too bright. He didn't just hit on her - he actually hit her and made his (temporary) escape.

Plus, it's Kirk we're talking about here.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 12:33pm

All part of his endgame to free his crew. You got to do what it takes. His sucker-punch in the cell and the "I'll call you" line at the end of the show underline he was stringing her along the whole time.

Well played, Kirk. That's why you're the Captain.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 12:55pm

Kirk's motives are always honest...he's using his wiles to improve his situation and that of his crewmates and/or ship. He's a Starfleet man, through and through. If he gets to dip his wick in the process, bonus.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 6:12pm

@John Barleycorn - I got into a long discussion about this with some friends, it wasn't specifically about this episode, but in general Kirk's whole attitude to aliens asking him "what is this thing you call love?" Kirk always offers to, erm, show them exactly what it means, but the discussion was that this was little short of abuse, likened to having intercourse with someone who was (is this the right euphemism these days?) mentally underdeveloped. You're taking advantage of them because they don't know what you are doing to them or really understand what's going on, and you're basically doing anything to get your end away. Hence the creepyness.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/02/09 7:56pm

@Prole

Does this mean that sorority girls should be off-limits too? (Not to mention bubble-headed Orion slave girls who somehow made their way into Starfleet Academy).

Seriously, though, even though Shahna didn't seem to be the sharpest pencil in the desk, I don't see what's creepy about it. She was, for all intents and purposes, Kirk's prison guard. Yes, he took advantage of her, but he also tried to explain (maybe "demonstrate" is a better word) why Earth ways were better than Triskelion ways. It seems to me that the Kirk-

Shahna relationship is actually one of the strong points of a fairly ridiculous episode. I'm curious, what were the opinions of your friends in your discussion of the show?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/03/09 7:10am

Well that's why I included the caveat "wasn't specifically about this episode" because, although I DO think Kirk is a bit creepy in this episode, it's more to do with Shatner's performance than it is the way this episode is specifically framed in terms of their relationship. Kirk here is using what leverage he has to try and get, um, on top of the situation, but it is using what (some) feminist writers would refer to as typical male attributes (strength, sex) to achieve what he's after. There's never REALLY a sense that anything which would come of it would or could be equal (not even the "I'll call you!" ending), and if the situations were reversed, it's doubtful if the same scenario would play out (for example, it would take until Star Trek V before a woman was seen to use her sexuality in a similar fashion). Thus in this episode part of the creepiness comes from the obvious and massive imbalance of power between the two protagonists.

So the opinions? Well essentially that, as we know, Star Trek is very, very much a window into the times that produced it, but that sometimes what underlies that can have implications far beyond what we would normally perceive or accept.

And I have no experience of sorority girls, so I shall refrain from commenting on THAT one...

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/03/09 8:51am

@Prole - I still don't quite see it as being creepy in this episode (as I said earlier, Shahna is a trained fighter with the keys to Kirk's cell), but I agree that the series too often takes the tack of "the girl swoons at Kirk's charms and defies her people, only to be discarded at the end of the show". Your points also bolster the case of those who found Kirk's flirtation with Miri creepy back in season 1. You're right - it's an interesting look at the sexual politics of the time, with many of the writers, I imagine, having come of age in the 1940s.

Reminds me of a Mad TV sketch where a black couple go to a retro-1950s diner and marvel with delight at how "it's just like being in the 50s!" until they're told the place doesn't serve Negroes.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/03/09 8:42pm

@Prole Hole:

I seem to remember a younger, sexier Uhura giving the ol' come on to the evil Sulu and then giving him the what-for 20+ years before the abysmal, boner-shriveling scene in ST V.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/03/09 9:20pm

Maybe the dialogue should be changed a bit.

Shahna: "What are those lights in the sky? Are they stars?"

Kirk: "Half of them are stars. Half of them are the lights given off from my stuff being thrown out of my old girlfriends' apartments and burned. But look, Shahna...half of them are stars!"

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/21/14 1:01am

Wasn't he simply, and credit due, reasonably using her so that his crew would not be killed?

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bmeyer

6/21/14 1:06am

"the series too often takes the tack of "the girl swoons at Kirk's charms and defies her people, only to be discarded at the end of the show" "

Funny how that didn't happen once in either season one or season two. I can't speak to season three. I am fascinated though by how these memes get started.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bProle Hole

6/21/14 1:12am

"and if the situations were reversed, it's doubtful if the same scenario would play out (for example, it would take until Star Trek V before a woman was seen to use her sexuality in a similar fashion)."

Damn right. Uhura would NEVER be allowed to entice and seduce some guy to distract him from monitoring the security board in order to make escape more likely. ("Mirror, Mirror")

They're called "wives." Why, I don't know.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bProle Hole

6/21/14 1:17am

"Kirk always offers to, erm, show them exactly what it means, but the discussion was that this was little short of abuse,"

You hang out with people who take themselves way, way too seriously. Never mind that the lives of all 430 crew members was at stake, Shanna was obviously an adult female. To imagine she's not capable of deciding for herself whether to romp with the cute slave in cell C is contemptibly dismissive of her agency. Besides, if anything, a trainer sleeping with a trainee is an example of the former abusing the latter; hardly the reverse.

Sounds like the sort of people who think if a woman has had a few drinks then has sex, she must have been raped.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tim\\_l](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 10:37am

Bill Scallert

Was Patty Duke's Dad. Now I'll never get that stupid theme song out of my head for the rest of the day.

They're Cousins! Identical Cousins!

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)tim\_l

7/02/09 12:09pm

Patty Duke and William Schallert were reunited for one episode of the totally forgotten Disney sitcom "The Torkelsons." She played the widow (or ex-wife? can't remember) of his son.

Also, I only know one line of the Patty Duke theme song, to wit:

"But Patty's only seen the sights a girl can see from Brooklyn Heights - what a crazy pair!"

but it will surely dance about in my wee brain all day long.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)tim\_l

7/02/09 12:26pm

Yes! Poppo!

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guytim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 12:27pm

The lyric that caused much snickering for us was:

"Our Patty loves to rock and roll,  
A hot dog makes her lose control — "

Indeed.

[Reply](#)

- [meyertim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 12:37pm

I once dated a girl who looked a lot like Patty Duke. Both points of the lyric held true.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distractingtim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 12:43pm

"There's Cathy who's been most everywhere.  
From Zanzibar to Barkley Square..."

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirktim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 2:43pm

Who was the prop comic who did a riff on that song on SNL? He had twin ventriloquist dummies or something. You go look it up.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guytim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 3:18pm

That young prop comic was none other than Joel Hodgson!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gagatim\\_1](#)

7/02/09 10:41pm

But they're Cheese Hostesses,  
Identical Cheese Hostesses...

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirktim\\_1](#)

7/03/09 12:36pm

So he is. Wow. I wore that clip out on Beta when I was a kid - only a genius could make guns out of so many objects.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrtim\\_1](#)

7/03/09 9:04pm

Who knew you could see a crazy pair from Brooklyn Heights— without binoculars, that is!

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirktim\\_1](#)

7/04/09 1:20am

Awesome. This thread has been a bonanza of great information. (Although I suspect the tuna casserole gun was Joel's. But if Mattel ever made one, I'm going to work there.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Well-Pounded Vag](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:49am

Off Of?

When an American writes "off of" (as in "a painting based off of one the series' most iconic scenes"), is this a regional thing? Pacific, Southern, or just a verbal habit which has carried over into written language, and not particular to any part of the States?

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 12:25pm

Shouldn't you just say "off"?

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 12:38pm

No, you really should say "based on." Something cannot be based (resting on the foundation of thus-and-such) OFF something else. Similarly, you cannot have a story "centered around" a premise. If it is "centered", it cannot also be "around"—it has to be "on". It's technically impossible. Which is the best kind of impossible.

Sorry to be pedantic. Zack, your ST write-ups are one of my favorite things to read here; I'm just bored at work and I like grammar. You've also reminded me to go back and read The Wheel of Time again. I forgot that there was some really awesome parts before I gave up around book 8 or 9.

[Reply](#)

- [Gorg](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 1:59pm

I think I gave up at around the 7th book - Crown of Swords. Not only was the plot not going anywhere but almost every single character had managed to get on my nerves. I always meant to go back and read the entire series from start to finish but I eventually decided it just wasn't worth the time.

[Reply](#)

- [Well-Pounded Vag](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 2:45pm

@HipsterDBag: I'm from New Zealand. I travelled through 25 states last year — most parts except prairie, southwest and Big Sky.

The "off of" term seems to fit the Southern way of speaking, but I often see it written in US websites and even papers. Curiously I never heard or read it in Canada.

(New Zealand follows England in spelling and grammar, so I would say "based on" or "copied from" as I'm sure many Americans would.)

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 2:46pm

Yeah, that's true. Maybe I'll just wait for the inevitable SyFy miniseries.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 2:48pm

To my ear "off of" is a verbal quirk that might be half-noticed when heard in speech, but is glaringly obvious when seen in print. Seems like most of these insta-blogs must be by necessity one verbal ramble put into print, with all the "off of"s, "could've"s and "that being said"s left verbatim.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#) Well-Pounded Vag

7/02/09 6:14pm

Talking about songs being "off" a certain album seems to be universal; "based off" seems American, and "Barry off Eastenders" seems British.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Well-Pounded Vag

7/03/09 8:47pm

@WPV:

Saying you were in most of the states except for the SouthWest, The PRairies and Montana is leaving out well...

Europe up to the URal Mouontains (and that's assuming you saw Alaska, which is that big on its' lonesome. How was Hawaii?

Seriously though, matey, sounds like you got around a good bit, and even to know that there's a 'bog sky' state puts you way ahead of US knowledge about Kiwis. And your grammar point is right on, it's a coloquialism, more oral than correct.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Prole Hole](#) Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:43am

AVClub Reviewer Unexpectedly Proved Wrong!

<http://tinyurl.com/m6opo9>

Sorry, Zach, I'm not proud of myself...

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#) Prole Hole

7/02/09 11:49am

The said thing is, that was originally an "Enterprise" joke, but I thought the italics might get confusing. Wow. Just... wow.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Prole Hole

7/02/09 11:49am

Awesomely done, Prole. Take that, well intended AV Club reviewer!

Also- I firmly remember the Tribbles plate being hawked in "Parade" magazine during the 1980s along with the Hamilton Mint's 3d chess set. I saw the advertisments for both in my blue haired grandma's house...in Iowa.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#) Prole Hole

7/02/09 11:59am

I must admit, I am genuinely curious who buys things like Franklin mint plates or commemorative china. I can honestly say that I have never met anyone who has ever owned a piece, sci-fi or not. Is it just peoples' grannies who are bored and flicking through some newspaper suppliment and order stuff? The tiny, tiny get-out-of-jail clause that sci-fi geeks have is that it's well known that we will buy any old shit as long as it's got a logo on it (see especially Doctor Who merchandise), but things like a snow tiger on a plate? Who BUYS these things?



[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:08pm

Funny story, my grannie was all three.

Oh, I've said too much.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:22pm

Not that there's anything wrong with that

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:24pm

I'm with Prole Hole. I think the Hamilton customer list should immediately be made available to the AV Club so we can start the "reeducation" process.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 12:49pm

Ridiculous. Commemorative plates. However, if one were to tear that Evel plate from the wall and properly dine off it you would be infused with the daring and baddassedness sufficient to jump a skycycle over Snake Canyon and pulverize every bone in your body.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Prole Hole

7/02/09 1:45pm

Also you would immediately die of lead toxicity.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Prole Hole

7/03/09 8:51pm

The head goes FORWARD, trickster, then back, then forward.. Then... you get the idea;..

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:38am

Plates

As an Iowan I can assure you that we don't buy commemorative plates. That is strickly for Nebraskans. Or dumbasses, as they are referred to in Iowa.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 11:46am

Well, la-dee-dah, Mr. Iowa.

Maybe Nebraskans just like eating food off plates that have a little CLASS.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 11:50am

Watch your step, Santo. You're surrounded by denizens of the Tall Corn State.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 12:55pm

I thought that the only thing that resided in Nebraska was the corn.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 1:50pm

Iowa is the Tall Corn State. Oklahoma's full of stinkin' Okies.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 7:11pm

Minnesotans call Iowa "The Land of Ten Lakes."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 7:53pm

I know of two. Where are the other eight?

[Reply](#)

- [cb](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/02/09 7:56pm

Ontarians call Minnesotans "The Land of Some Lesser Number of Lakes Compared to Ontario's Wicked Number of Lakes"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/03/09 8:54pm

"You are in I-Oh-Way!"

(take your commemorative plate on the way out)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Al running with the bulls Gore

7/05/09 5:32pm

Floyd Barber, the Deadwood list is that-a-ways!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 10:19am

The trouble with tribbles...

is that one is never enough.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimbolaya](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 10:26am

I thought the trouble with tribbles was that they kept multiplyin...

...OH! I see what you did there. Well done you magnificent bastard.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 11:44am

I gotta say, this is the perfect thread for that multiple post glitch to strike.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 12:00pm

Meh.

I would have gone with "One quatloo on the Newcomer!" But that's the difference between you and me.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 12:19pm

Die from eating poisoned quatrottricale.

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 4:54pm

That seems a tad harsh...

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 7:04pm

Kirk without a shirt. No girdle. Must be an episode early in the season.

[Reply](#)

- [mattereaterlad](#)Adolph Oliver Pubes

7/02/09 8:38pm

The troubling thing about tribbles  
Is that tribbles are troubling pests  
Their bodies are made out of furballs  
Your fancy space grain they'll infest  
They're fluffy, puffy, furry, purry  
Fun-fun-fun-fun-fun  
But the most troubling thing about tribbles is  
There's a hell of a lot more than one

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Chartex](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:49am

Defector Dish

The Russians invented Defector Dishes. My pewter Enterprise has a DEFLECTOR Dish.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Chartex

7/02/09 12:59pm

Don't worry. We've all been there. Damn spell checkers are going to destroy the English Language.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Chartex

7/02/09 5:38pm

I remember an episode of DS9 that made that joke. I tend to believe that that was the only show that could routinely pull off comedy episodes (though the later seasons' Ferengi episodes were really, REALLY bad).

[Reply](#)

- [Come On In Here](#)Chartex

7/02/09 5:42pm

A defector dish is what Sean Connery ate off of in "Hunt for Red October"

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Chartex

7/02/09 7:22pm

A defector dish is also something that Sean Connery had in "From Russia With Love".

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Chartex

7/03/09 8:48pm

Rim shot! (seriously you beat me to it, meyer, you bloody commie!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:26pm

DS9

Something I loved about DS9 was the fact they did go back to TOS for a few characters and episode ideas, and it usually worked out very well. The original actors that played Kang, Kor, and Koloth show up again (in the new Klingon make-up, mind you) and in Trials and Tribulations it's Darwin that causes the whole time travel fiasco.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

7/02/09 12:49pm

Fred Darwin: Male Space Prostitute

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Right Wingnut

7/02/09 1:02pm

Not to mention the whole callback to the evil parallel dimension.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Right Wingnut

7/02/09 1:41pm

"Do they still sing songs about The Great Tribble Hunt?"

That's some hilariousness right there. My second-favorite all-time Trek joke.

[Reply](#)

- [cb](#)Right Wingnut

7/02/09 7:59pm

Kirk meets Tribbles at K-7

Kirk meets Tribbles at K-7

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

7/03/09 8:38pm

All good tribbles go to heaven,  
all bad Vulcans...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen

7/03/09 10:39pm

Music and Mudd

Tribbles had original music by Jerry Fielding, his only work for Star Trek; it was also tracked with some music from the Doomsday Machine score and the Metamorphosis score. Fielding had also done Hogans Heroes, and later won Academy Awards for his scores for The Wild Bunch, Straw Dogs, and Outlaw Josey Wales. Writer Jeff Bond called this "a charming comic score". He points out the "groaning ethnic theme for Scotty" for the scene where Scotty explains the fight to Kirk; and a "beautifully-scored moment" where Kirk picks tribbles off the bridge.

I have always hated that weird mewling sound for the tribbles. Bond's book says that the sound was trombones recorded at half-speed, which is interesting and innovative. I still don't like it, and I don't find the score that memorable.

(Obviously "Gamesters" tracked the hell out of Gerald Fried's score for Amok Time for its most memorable musical moments. Don't remember what else was used. I loved Gamesters as a kid for the fight scenes and the music; but it's practically unwatchable now. Also I have the CD with Fried's score, so I don't need to watch an episode to get a fix of that music.)

I read somewhere that the Tribble-salesman was supposed to be Harry Mudd, but Roger Carmel was unavailable for some reason. Not sure what he was doing: imdb has him on I, Spy and Batman and The Mothers-In-Law in 1967, also in a movie called The Venetian Affair. Maybe a producer saw a conflict with him also appearing in "I, Mudd" in the same season? I think the extended bar fight scene makes more sense if it's Harry Mudd pirouetting thru the carnage.

There's a music credit in the JJ Abrams Star Trek movie, something attributed to "Cyrano Jones". Anyway know what it is?

Tribbles bear a huge resemblance to "flat cats" from Heinlein's 1952 book The Rolling Stones. Wikipedia has an anecdote about that, with the episode writer contacting Heinlein about it.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode

7/05/09 11:01am

Yeah, David Gerrold talks a lot about the 'Flat Cats' controversy in his quite wonderful book about writing the episode. Sadly it appears that Heinlein remembered the situation a bit differently, from what I've heard, and the Gerrold was lucky to avoid a huge lawsuit...

Consciously or not, even he admits that he lifted the idea of lovable furry little creatures reproducing until they over ran a spaceship. He tries to explain it away by saying i need creatures, and they needed to be cheap, and my sister had a furry toy, etc, but when it come right down to it: He read Heinlein's story when he was a kid, loved it even, then supposedly totally forgot it until it was called to his attention by one of the producers (Coon?). This may or may not be true.

As with all of these lapses in memory/judgement (Glass, Fry, Sarah Palin's Gingrich speech) there's a thin line between creativity, homage, inspiration and outright theft.

By all reports, even Gerrold's, Heinlein was a real mensch aboutt he whole thing, for whatever reason.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode

7/05/09 6:55pm

Jerry Fielding did also write the music for "Spectre of the Gun," and an interesting and vivid score it is. Dig, for example, the bitonality in the solo honky-tonk piano that's heard when Kirk and company "enter" the "saloon."

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode

7/06/09 9:12am

Sorry: yes, Fielding did Spectre in season 3. Tribbles was his only score for season 2. Jeff Bond reviews the Spectre score as a dry run for Fielding's Wild Bunch score.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Richelieu Jr

6/21/14 12:11am

I heard Heinlein said something to the effect that he was not the inventor of furry pets.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 1:35pm

RE:AVClub Reviewer Unexpectedly Proved Wrong!

My mother knew I liked Spock, so she bought me the Spock plate as a surprise. While it's not something I would have ever thought to buy, it's well done and I enjoy it. Anyhow, I toyed with the idea of getting the Enterprise one, but I just couldn't do it

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Loose Stool

7/02/09 1:46pm

I have a mental picture of you playing with your plate, like Milhouse played with Bart's "soul". If you follow my meaning.

"Look out, GI JOe's going for the Spock plate!"

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Loose Stool

7/02/09 1:55pm

If the Ayatollah can't have it no one can!

And just to respond to my own comment,

"The Ayatollah of Rock'n'Rolla!"

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)Loose Stool

7/02/09 3:18pm

It used to sit on my nightstand and I'd put my spare change in it. Whatever crap they painted it with is pretty tough though, because it never got a nick on it.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Loose Stool

7/03/09 8:36pm

A Nick at Night!

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:48am

Commemorative Platelets

When I was young my grandmother got me a pewter Enterprise-D with a gold defector dish. She figured, "he likes Star Trek, I like the Franklin Mint... win/win." It's on a bookshelf in my den. Thanks Grandma.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Chartex

7/02/09 11:52am

Defector dish? Had it gone over to the Romulans or something?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex

7/02/09 12:05pm

When did pewter become a precious metal? If grannie gave you a lead Enterprise, would you cherish it as much?

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Chartex

7/02/09 2:55pm

Is it the one with nescells that light up?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Chartex

7/02/09 7:14pm

The top comes off, so you can put Granny's ashes in it.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:35pm

Tune In Next Week

Zack - I'm assuming you're tackling comic gangsters and giant amoebas next week?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)meyer

7/02/09 12:59pm

Yup.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

7/02/09 1:10pm

Cool. "A Piece of the Action" and "The Immunity Syndrome". Far from the greatest episodes ever, but should be fun to revisit.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer

7/02/09 1:47pm

I renew my belief that Piece of the Action is, in fact, the most fun episode ever.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

7/02/09 7:28pm

Depends - how many Quatloos to open? And it's Lonnegan. Doyle Lonnegan, Mr. Sporkwielder. I suggest you remember that or find yourself another game.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:21am

Tribble toys

My parents were Star Trek fans who turned their fannishness into a side business selling (new) Star Trek merchandise at the local flea market (often while I hid with the money under the table). There was some cool stuff and some not so cool stuff, as well as a giant cardboard box full of stuffed tribbles. They weren't much as toys in their own right, but I could get in that box and pretend I was standing in Kirk's pile of dead tribbles.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)partdavid

7/02/09 12:06pm

My parents weren't even cool enough to be nerds. Sniff.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)partdavid

7/02/09 12:28pm

I bought 3 of them through mail order, back in the day. Most supremely disappointing when they arrived.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)partdavid

7/03/09 8:56pm

I hate to beak it to you partdavid, but your parents were not selling Trek merchandise. Does the work 'merkin' ring a bell? And those vibrating things weren't 'archon-sticks' either...

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 3:00pm

Death by snu-snu

Thank goodness I'm apparently not the only one who was put strongly in mind of Bea Arthur by the voice of Chekov's thrall.

Yeah, I thought of Gamesters as such a quintessential episode I was surprised at how full of problems it was watching it again. I think the premise is pretty sturdy, so I'd maybe have graded it a solid B, but the way the Kirk/Shahna thing plays out is basically self-parody, and as cool as the reveal of the brains are, the implied history of the whole setup is pretty flimsy. I wonder if at least half the reason it's so fondly remembered now is because of a single line in Deep Space Homer.

[Reply](#)

- [Snugglesaurus Rex](#)spicoli323

7/02/09 11:57pm

I can't post new comments.

It seems like Gamesters of Triskelion could have been fixed with a simple rewrite. Make the brains victims of immortality scheme that only worked on their brains. If they lost their bodies rather than gave them up, and were desperate for some kind of sensation or thrill, so out of desperation they started the games, we would sympathize more with them, and it would be easier to believe that Kirk could set them on a different path.

Also, the writers could have thematically tied Kirk teaching the green haired chick love and independence and the brains teaching the thralls civilization. Kirk would be teaching them a better way, that in their gambling addiction, and desperate state, they couldn't figure out on their own.



One more rewrite is all it would have taken to make this one at least a B.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)spicoli323

7/03/09 8:36pm

Of course, the rewriters would have had to have your inspiration, which I honestly find not bad at all.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bSnugglesaurus Rex

6/21/14 12:38am

True for a hefty chunk of episodes.

That, and firing costumer Theiss. I doubt I'll ever forget my squinting response as an adult to Friday's Child: "Is that seven foot warrior really wearing a pink unitard and purple feather boa?"

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:51pm

Hey Gamesters is a pretty rocking ep

What's not to love? Creepy Dracula looking dude! Fisticuffs! Amok Time music fisticuffs!!! 3 on Kirk!!!!

Would only have been better if Sulu were swapped out for Chekov, but I guess they wanted to have Kirk in a position where he essentially is gonna be the one doing the heavy lifting with the fighting/escape plotting/protecting his crew.

The danger is heightened because there's no Spock there with him to bail him out, which is cool and a first maybe.

The first time a woman at the helm this ep too I noticed. Was it also the first one a woman was the sole writing credit? Would a man write that attempted Uhura rape scene (Disturbing even watching it now)?

One complaint: why didn't Kirk Judo chop Dracula dude right off the bat?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster

7/02/09 1:33pm

I seem to remember reading somewhere that George Takei was not available for this ep as he was filming "The Green Berets"

And +1 on the Uhura scene - that just wasn't nessecary.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)The Pizza Monster

7/02/09 7:17pm

Dracula dude's got nads.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 10:46am

William Schallert? I've met that guy!

He is a gentleman and plays a mean honky-tonk piano. I saw him in an episode of My Name is Earl a couple of years ago and was very pleased to see that he was still working.

Also, from now on I plan to measure hilarity in levels of Nimoy.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)SpindleFiend

7/02/09 7:07pm

However, now that you mentioned him,  
he'll end up as next week's Celebrity Dead.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)SpindleFiend

7/03/09 9:03pm

He's really the guy who did everything and never got old for decades and decades...

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 4:52pm

I like to believe

that William Campbell is Bruce Campbell's father. I have no evidence for this belief. I just decided it after watching the squire of gothos. Nothing you say can convince me otherwise.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Henry

7/02/09 4:53pm

this comment is even better the second time.

[Reply](#)

- [daveshayne](#)Henry

7/02/09 6:16pm

A thought so nice you thunk it twice.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:55pm

Stunt Doubles

One of the things that surprised me about an episode centered on gladiatorial combat was that I didn't catch any obvious stunt doubles in the fights. A nice change of pace!

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bmeyer

6/21/14 12:52am

Probably not directed by one of the alternating regulars for the second season. [checks imdb] Yup. The series signed Joe Pevney and Marc Daniels to alternate episodes through most of season two. Both were crap when it came to filming fight scenes and concealing stunt players, but the network never fussed. Guys like that, who rarely if ever got the stars injured, kept getting invited back. Cause Shatner to suffer a black eye, though, and send the shooting schedules all to hell? That meant a quick trip to the unemployment line and a bad rep.

[Reply](#)

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 4:52pm

I like to believe

that William Campbell is Bruce Campbell's father. I have no evidence for this belief. I just decided it after watching the squire of gothos. Nothing you say can convince me otherwise.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Henry

7/02/09 7:34pm

"All right, you primitive screwheads...listen up! This is my energy-to-matter transforming magic 18th century mirror! Available in the home decor aisle. Shop smart - shop S-Mart."

I like it!

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 12:54pm

These write ups can be a little on the nit-picky side...

but "apparently, Klingons don't travel with their own entertainment, like porn or board games." cracked me up. Well played sir.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

7/02/09 7:02pm

There is a version of Klingon Trivia Pursuit that they sometimes play, but unfortunately it's a little dull, with all the answers being, "You eviscerate them and drink their blood."

And, of course, Tri-Ominos.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:59am

Together?

In a way, these are horrible episodes to put together. Tribbles' camp and humor is all intended, whereas Triskellion's is all unintentional. On the other hand, these make a great juxtaposition, both are way fun to watch in 2009, although not necessarily in the way they were originally intended.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)john barleycorn must diet

6/21/14 1:17am

What's campy about Tribbles? It's comedy. They're different.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/07/16 11:19pm

School House Rock reference. You see, Zack's like me, if a reference occurs to me, I'll quote it. Even if it does nothing for the story I'm telling. So I just want him to know, seven years after he wrote them, I caught his reference to Conjunction Junction.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Michael Knight

7/07/16 11:34pm

Oh shit a huge Wheel of Time reference, and a Planet of the Apes breeze by.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Zack Handlen

6/21/14 12:07am

"There's this freaky scene where Lars comes in to Uhura's room and they go off camera and Uhura starts screaming; you think he's trying to rape her, and you're pretty sure nothing happens, but it's an all-too-real moment in an otherwise campy episode. It doesn't help that Chekov's interactions with the orange-skinned woman (too many carrots?) are played entirely for laughs."

Come on. Everyone knows guys being sexually molested or raped is hilarious. So it was in 1968, so it is today. I stumbled onto three minutes of a 2011 ep of Law & Order and one of our heroic detectives blithely threatens a male cashier who didn't instantaneously provide a mildly helpful piece of evidence with gang rape if he didn't hand over a list.

I'm trying to imagine the show's producer hanging onto his/her job if one of the shows stars threatened a female character with gang rape in similar circumstances and I can't. S/he'd be out the instant it aired. Yeah, there's a rape culture in the US. It's in men's prisons, though, and it's fueled there in part by the ease and even comedy with which we treat the idea of men having their mouths and assholes fucked. Granted it's a pet cause, but I'm not wrong. It's a disgrace, and should be no more acceptable in 'entertainment' than when the abuse of women is played for chuckles.

As for Triskelion, does anyone have ANY idea how William Theiss kept his job for so long? Put the players in not-idiotic costumes and it plays a lot better. The same is true for roughly a dozen episodes of the series. Sure, the man could drape gauze on beautiful women like nobody's business, but this is bloody ridiculous.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen

7/06/09 9:25am

Not Lazarus?

For decades, and I mean up until today, I thought the other main Klingon, the guy who goes on the extended riff about Kirk and the Enterprise and then gets punched by Scotty: I thought that was the actor who played Lazarus from The Alternative Factor.

Turns out it's a different guy. Lazarus was played by Robert Brown; the Kilington is played by Michael Pataki.

[Reply](#)

- [PoseyHipster](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 6:30pm

Favorite bit from "Tribbles"

I'm surprised I haven't seen any mention of it to this point - one of my favorite bits in the whole series is watching everyone try to maintain their composure as (apparently) a stagehand up in the storage bin is throwing tribbles at Shatner's head, in a lame attempt to simulate stragglers falling down.

[Reply](#)

- [eh](#)Zack Handlen

7/03/09 1:28am

Stars

Isn't Gamesters the ep with the much-parodied conversation about stars that Kirk has with an alien babe?

This episode really does beg to be satirized, what with the clueless thralls and the colorful alien brains. It has camp classic written all over it.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

7/02/09 8:17pm

Hate on Cyrano all You Want

But having his name at the tip of my tongue helped me win a trivia contest where the prize was tickets to the Hollywood premiere of the new Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [A Rising Ape](#)Zack Handlen

7/05/09 6:38am

Aaand one more almost-forgotten Futurama joke finally slots into place.

They've got a lot of brains, and a lot of... chutzpah.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen

7/02/09 11:14pm

Pipes on the Enterprise?

Do I detect an influence of JJ Abrams here?

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek*: "A Piece Of The Action" / "The Immunity Syndrome"

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published July 9, 2009

[Comments \(157\)](#)



Man, I love gangster movies. I couldn't tell you why. I have this half-baked theory that crime dramas are the closest thing that movies set in modern times can get to the power and danger of royalty, but you guys deserve to have things fully cooked, so let's leave that to the side. I'm not a violent man, I don't break any laws or wish I could, and when I watch something like *Goodfellas*, I don't have any wish to be one of the guys I'm watching. But it seems like a third of my favorite movies have bad men with guns shooting other bad men with guns, and everybody's wearing suits and has their hair slicked back.

I haven't seen any of the old school classics, like the original *Scarface* or *Public Enemy*, but I'd bet "A Piece of the Action," the first episode we'll be looking at today, does some cribbing from that era. There's not a lot of tragedy in "Piece," or the dark violence and brutal sex that we associate with the crime genre, but it's definitely got guys in suits, and lots, and lots, of tommy guns. This is a very silly hour of *Trek*, and it's a wonderfully entertaining one; when Shatner isn't hamming it up more than usual, Kirk and Spock get some funny stuff to do, and the ep manages decent mileage out of a ridiculous concept.

The *Enterprise* is making a stop at Sigma Iotia II. The last Federation ship to visit Iotia was the *Horizon*, and it went down shortly after the trip; for once, this doesn't implicate anyone in our story, but it does mean that the Iotians, after that initial contact, haven't heard from Starfleet in a long time. Before beaming down, Kirk talks with a planet leader named Oxmyx, and after an odd conversation—Oxmyx has a very limited understanding of what's going on—Kirk arranges to meet Oxmyx on Iotia. Spock and McCoy come along for the ride, and on the way to the transporters, they talk about how the *Horizon's* visit came before the Federation instituted a "Noninterference Directive." There's not telling how much the *Horizon's* crew messed with the locals. But even in our heroes wildest dreams, it's doubtful they could've imagined what was waiting for them: an entire society based on a book called *Chicago Mobs Of The Twenties*. (Published in 1992!)

After a few minutes of marveling at what they're seeing—old cars, flappers, and a heavily armed populace—Kirk, Spock, and McCoy are picked up by Oxmyx's men. There's some passable attempts at slang (it's artificial sounding, but

not embarrassingly so), and then a drive-by shooting that takes out one of the Oxmyx goons. There's a gang war between Oxmyx and a man named Krako, and everybody's trying to find an edge to shoot their way to the top. When Kirk and the others meet Oxmyx in person, they find that, despite his ignorance as to what Kirk represents, he wants men and guns to help him put Krako down once and for all; and he's not the only one that thinks Kirk is his ticket to victory.

Plot-wise, "Piece" is on the redundant side. Kirk bounces back and forth between Oxmyx and Krako, and a lot of goons get punched and Vulcan neck-pinned. Once you get the basic idea, there aren't many surprises, and we never get to know any of the locals beyond the two main heavies. The hook is on the goofy side; we see Oxmyx has the *Mobs* book in a place of honor in his office, and Spock tells us a couple times how "imitative" the Iotians are, but it's odd that they'd read a history book about criminal enterprises and decide that was the only way to go. Surely the book mentioned law enforcement? I can understand them not wanting to be like civilians, but you'd think there'd be some copy-cat cops hanging around. We never see any, though.

Of course, I haven't read *The Book*, so I can't really say *what's* in it. And you know, it's not a bad premise for this show. Good stories can have holes and still be good, and we rarely dislike things just because they don't make perfect sense. "Piece" makes as much sense as it needs to, and it has some nice touches that make the hook easier to swallow. My favorite is the fact that not only does everybody in the city have a gun, there are guns hanging from the walls, too. Everything the Iotians copied from that book is a little too enthusiastic, like students so eager to impress the teacher that they show their work twice.

Another plus is that Kirk and Spock are having the time of their lives. McCoy is sidelined for most of the episode, either holding people hostage or having his gun taken away, and while he's waiting, the captain and first officer get into all sorts of mischief. By the halfway mark, Kirk has scored a couple of goon's outfits, and there's something delightful about Kirk and Spock gatting about in period garb. We've seen Shatner and Nimoy set up as a comedy duo before, and this is one of the better uses of Shatner's sense of absurdity and Nimoy's stone face. Just the way Nimoy reacts after Shatner nearly kills them in a car is great.

I also appreciate that some effort was made to justify the *Enterprise's* involvement in the situation. This isn't about mineral rights or the strategic value of the planet's location—it's about trying to fix the mess the *Horizon* made when it got involved so many years before. The *Enterprise* itself is never threatened, and Kirk and the others don't really seem all that concerned about their own safety, but that works to the ep's advantage; along with the Noninterference Directive, it explains why Kirk doesn't have a bunch of red-shirts come down with phasers and shoot anyone who gets in his way. He does rely more and more on Scotty's help as the situation progresses (concluding with some light phaser stunning from orbit), but the nature of the problem is clever, and its resolution, if not entirely believable, at least satisfactory.

Oxmyx wants Kirk's help to bring everybody in league under him, and while the method may be faulty, it's not a bad idea. As Spock points out, in order for the Iotians to get back on the normal curve, they need to have one unified society to drive progress. (Okay, so a global unified society wouldn't really work that early in a society's development, but since these episodes work better when you view the "planets" as "countries," let's think in those terms.) So Kirk decides to pull a reverse *Yojimbo* (or an *Un-Red Harvest*, if you like) and unify the gangs by making them all scared of the Federation.

I normally don't mind Shatner's over-acting, but he really gets some serious scenery consumption in here, and it gets old. There were a few scenes where the person on-screen stopped being Kirk and turned into self-parody, and it takes away part of the fun when he starts indulging. (I'm guessing I should've been more amused by the "fizzbin" scene than I was. Although even then, I was kind of amused.) I guess imitative alien gangsters are more impressed by... pauses... and—weird gesutres than us Earthlings, though, because Kirk gets the job done, and when the *Enterprise* leaves Iotia, all the warring factions are joined together in fear of a common threat. Can't imagine how that could possibly go wrong. Also can't imagine how McCoy leaving behind a communicator will hurt anybody, right?

"Piece" is high-energy and endearing. And it even manages to be occasionally insightful, like in this exchange between

Kirk, Spock and an urchin who offers to help, for a price:

Orphan: What's in it for me?

Kirk: What do you want?

Orphan: A piece of the action.

Spock: You do not even know what the action is going to be.

I like that—it's a planet full of mercenaries who are so invested in getting ahead they don't even know what "ahead" means. The episode isn't very serious, and it's not like it's trying to teach us a valuable lesson, but, like the guns on the walls, sometimes it's the little things that count.

I had zero expectations going in to "The Immunity Syndrome." I'm reasonably sure that I've seen all of the first two seasons of *Trek*, because I remember borrowing both from the library a few years ago. But then I stumble across this one, completely unprepared for it, and I find out it rocks. And all I can think is, what the *hell*, brain? What the *hell*. You remember the lyrics to the *Duck Tales* theme, but you can't remember the show about the GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMOEBA? Sometimes I wish I'd done more drugs, because then I'd have an excuse.

Once again, the *Enterprise* finds itself called in to handle a situation that no one else can. They're on their way back from an exhausting mission that has everyone on board (including Kirk) itching for some shore leave, when Spock has an Obi-Wan moment, sensing that the *Intrepid*, a ship with 400 Vulcans on board, has just been destroyed. An order comes in from Starfleet soon after, assigning Kirk and his crew are to investigate the disappearance. Doesn't matter that they're tired, doesn't matter that they're on edge and frustrated. There's something weird out there and it's breaking things. Time to go to work.

Having the *Enterprise* as the only available ship to do something incredibly dangerous is a set-up that the series has used before and will use again, but it works well here. Given that the threat the crew encounters deals its damage in attrition, the lack of sleep and stress everyone's dealing with even before the story gets going means things start tense and go downhill from there. After the over-the-top nuttiness of "Piece," it's bracing the way "Immunity" goes for the throat. Like all good thrillers, it never lets you forget that the danger is out there; and even better, it never lets that danger get tedious.

Spock's Obi-Wan moment is a little weird, though. This is the first we've heard of a ship with a full crew of Vulcans aboard, and Spock's knowledge of their deaths serves mostly to give him an extra layer of motivation through the episode. It also gives us the creepy vibe of passing through territory that others have lived and died in; there's a nice moment when Spock tells Kirk that the crew of the *Intrepid* most likely did everything they're doing now, and it didn't end up helping them at all. (Of course, that moment gets strange when Spock explains how the Vulcans couldn't understand the concept of "defeat." I'm not sure that really works; it has to do with the fact that the Vulcans have never been conquered, but I don't think an alien race ever defeated us humans, but I'd say we know what losing is.)

The *Enterprise* follows where the *Intrepid* left off, and finds what appears to be a hole in space. The instruments can't make heads or tails of it, not even when it sends out a signal that weakens half the crew (including Uhura). The ship is eventually swallowed in darkness—we get a great visual of the view-screen, completely black—and nobody knows what's going on. Except the engines are losing power, and, according to the on-board computers, everybody is dying. Something's got hold of the *Enterprise*, and it's pulling it close; and the closer the ship gets, the more impossible escape becomes.

There's a lot to love in "Immunity": the Spock/McCoy dynamic is just right, everyone makes smart choices, and we're given enough information about the threat that we understand the stakes, but not enough to make us question the plausibility. As *Trek* goes, the science fiction is credible. The monster is a single celled organism that's 11, 000 miles long, and the field it emits saps the *Enterprise's* energy sources and is lethal to life as we know it. There's no communication possible, and no goofy little person at the controls. It's just this alien thing, and it has to be destroyed or else the whole universe is at risk. (Although even that might not be enough; Kirk and McCoy talk about what'll happen if there's more of the things floating around—humans could wind up as the viruses inside a giant host body.) The whole



thing is very creepy. There's that Lovecraftian vibe of huge empty spaces and monsters so vast that even their size becomes malevolent.

So how do we stop it? Through the power of Science, of course. Once the *Enterprise* comes within spitting distance of the GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMOEBA, they've got to work out how to kill it. Spock and McCoy determine that the only way to do that is for somebody to make a close study of the alien and figure out if it has any weak spots. Both are interested in making the trip, even if it is a suicide mission. Spock's request to pilot the craft makes sense; he's Mr. Science, after all, and he's also got a personal stake in things. But McCoy? That's just neat; for once, we get to see Bones really excited about being a biologist.

Kirk picks Spock in the end—and was anybody else surprised that he didn't supercede them both and pilot the shuttlecraft himself? (Another thing to appreciate: Kirk acting like a goddamn captain.) So Spock goes on the suicide mission, and even though we know he'll be back, things do get suspenseful. Spock manages to send a message to the ship that the best way to kill the thing is from the inside, where it isn't shielded. Then Spock goes out of range, and Kirk has to decide how act on his advice; in classic Kirk fashion, he risks everything to fly right into the heart of the creature, and then uses some anti-matter to finish the job. He risks everything again when Spock's shuttlecraft gets close enough to lock onto with a tractor beam—the ship's almost out of power as it is, and it'd be safer if he'd just left Spock to die.

But that's not how we do things on the *Enterprise*. There's a great scene which shows Spock on the shuttlecraft, recording his commendations to the *Enterprise* captain and crew, while back on the ship, Kirk's doing the same thing for Spock and the others. It's surprisingly moving, even though we know nobody's really in serious danger. So of course Kirk's going to risk it all to save Spock in the end, because the only thing that matters as much to him as his ship are the people aboard it.

In the end, the GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMOEBA is destroyed, Spock is saved, and the universe is safe for another day or two. "Immunity" holds up nicely; even the effects, usually hit or miss on the series, still look good. (I'm talking about the original version, not the revamped one.) The further we get from the first season, and from the episodes I remember well, the more I wonder how terrible the show will become. If there's still a chance of bumping into stuff like "Piece" and "Immunity," at least I've got some reason to make it through the rougher spots.

#### **Grades:**

**"A Piece Of The Action": B+**

**"The Immunity Syndrome": A**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- After McCoy realizes he left his communicator behind, Spock mentions that the transtator circuit inside is the source of all their equipment. Which is one of those ideas that raises way more questions than it answers.
- I love Kirk's fuzzy fedora.
- So: GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMEOBA—good band name?
- Next week, it's "A Private Little War" and "Return To Tomorrow."

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (156)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [AlerZack Handlen](#)

7/09/09 10:56am

Memo for J.J. Abrams

Keeping with the tone of the original series, I'd love to see the gangster planet pop up in the next Star Trek film. Or the Nazi planet. Or the cowboy planet. Or the other cowboy planet.

[Reply](#)

- [Carlton\\_Hungus](#)Aler

7/09/09 11:03am

What about the caveman/American Civil War planet, why no love for them?

[Reply](#)

- [Aler](#)Aler

7/09/09 11:15am

Also the Greek planet and the Roman planet. And the studio back lot planet.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Aler

7/09/09 11:21am

If Enterprise had gotten a 5th season, I'm pretty sure there would have been a Studio Parking Lot Planet.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Aler

7/09/09 12:17pm

Let's not forget the cold war planet. The Enterprise: on a five-year mission to find every planet that's almost identical to Earth.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Aler

7/09/09 12:27pm

The cowboy planet was the best one of the bunch, because it was merely an illusion created by a pretty cool-looking alien to kill them. The others have no excuse, even though I like me some of that Indian planet. Damn that Hodgkin's Law of Parallel Planet Development, which only seems to apply to Earth. How come no parallel Klingon homeworlds?

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Aler

7/09/09 1:50pm

Because that would just be silly.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Aler

7/09/09 3:18pm

And Vasquez' Planet. They went there several times.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [S. Jerusalem](#)Aler

7/09/09 5:11pm

There's also the casino planet in TNG, which seems remarkably similar to "Action." There's a group of extraterrestrials who use a cheesy crime fiction story to base their civilization. However, they did do it to make a human astronaut feel at home but kept doing it even after he died.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Aler

7/09/09 7:02pm

@Bunj - Extra cool if the starship design was art-deco.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Aler

7/09/09 8:24pm

@Master Plaster: Are you implying that the Kazon from Voyager weren't, in some way, shape, or form, parallel world Klingons?

And, hello, the Burger King Kingons?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Aler

7/09/09 9:21pm

I actually had a friend who was excited about the Ferengis (yes, and this after the crazy arm-waving debut!) because he thought they were supposed to be descendants of the 'Piece o' the Action' fellas...

There are none so blind as those who see what they want to see.. Roddenberry's over-arching master-plan...

[Reply](#)

- [Aler](#)Aler

7/09/09 10:57pm

In the book "Worlds of the Federation" (proudly displayed in my bookcase, 20 years after the original purchase), it's said that the Iotians took the transtator and created an imitation Starfleet planet.

TOS-planet!

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Aler

7/09/09 11:39pm

Spider - the Casino milieu was handled better than most "random genre planet" episodes. It wasn't the alien civilization that changed; they created this one pocket of the planet with a holodeck-type loop. And then presumably went away forever, leaving the thing running without thought for the astronaut's lifespan. The Enterprise has to learn the rules of the place like in Piece of the Action, but there was no foofaraw about changing society. It was more of a puzzlebox ep.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Aler

7/10/09 6:53am

Late to the party again, sorry guys (this was a lot easier for me when this was posted on a Friday and I was drinking at work...), but I completely agree with Master Plaster Blaster Caster - cowboy planet is definitely the best "parallel" episode, partly because it's not really a parallel planet, partly because they have an excuse for everything to look back lot-y and cheap (it's all an illusion!), and partly because it gets the creepy, disconcerting air that I think "Catspaw" probably aimed for and missed.

I for one am glad they never revisited the Iotans in TNG - look what happened when they tried to do a sequel (to The Naked Now) - we know how well THAT turned out... (SPOILER! Fucking awful).

[Reply](#)

- [Aler](#)Aler

7/10/09 9:25am

"The Naked Time" was their first episode after the pilot, so they should be cut a little slack. A drunken party is a pretty good way to introduce the characters.

[Reply](#)

- [Aler](#)Aler

7/10/09 9:27am

"Naked Now" was TNG, "Naked Time" was TOS.

There goes my nerd bona fides.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Aler

7/10/09 10:23am

Yea, sorry, that was work getting in the way again. You are of course correct. I hereby accept my two week nerd suspension without protest

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Aler

7/12/09 12:25pm

uhm, "Naked Now" involves a robot getting his freak on with a foxy lady. what the hell is not to love about that?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 10:05am

I love the first and last thing Kirk says in the Immunity Factor:

Captain's Log: "We're headed for some much needed rest on some lovely... (glances at hot yeoman) ..planet."

Classic Space Pimp Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 10:26am

Great review again Zack. I always have a soft spot for Spock and Kirk "undercover", weather it's gangsters, Depression-era vagabonds, or Nazis. They really shine in those moments.

I also hadn't seen The Immunity Factor for awhile up until this week, it was great to watch these eps back to back for two different kinds of Trek cool.

But wasn't McCoy a bit of a douche for not saying "Good luck" to Spock's face? And wasn't Spock even more of a douche for saying "tell McCoy he should've wished me luck." when it looked like he wasn't gonna make it? Was he being petty or ironic? I thought Vulcans don't roll like that.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 10:26am

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[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 11:06am

I don't think Spock was being petty. I think this was an example of two people who have deeper feelings than they express out loud, or at least that's what the writers were going for. Spock doesn't strike me as someone who would twist the rhetorical knife with his last breath.

When I die, my last words will be "I told you I was sick..."

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 11:18am

It's a nice moment. Spock, of course, doesn't believe in luck. Is he hurt that McCoy wouldn't get over "losing" the battle for the right to go on the suicide mission and at least be polite? Spock isn't supposed to feel emotions like that, but we all know that he does, indeed, feel the connection to his crewmates.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 12:12pm

I'd advise yas to keep dialing, Oxmyx.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 12:14pm

Never been a big fan of "A Piece of the Action". Trek had way too many parallel Earth stories due to budget constraints, and in this one they don't even seem to be trying. A book influences the entire world this much? Did the book contain explicit instructions on how to build 1920's cars and tommy guns? Is everyone a mobster, or just the lucky ones? Just too goofy and half-baked for me, like "The Omega Glory". I'll take space hippies over this any day, even though the driving scene was actually funny.

[Reply](#)

- [Random Internet Trek Dork](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 1:37pm

At least "A Piece of the Action" is fun. "The Omega Glory" just makes me want to kick things. The bit at the beginning with the crew turned into their component minerals is cool and freaked me out when I was younger, but then the episode goes downhill really, really fast after that.

[Reply](#)

- [Random Internet Trek Dork](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 1:42pm

And now I'll be an ass and reply to myself with an afterthought: On the other hand, "Bread and Circuses" makes "The Omega Glory" look like an amazingly good parallel earth story.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 2:59pm

Aw, c'mon. I love "The Omega Glory!" It's just not '60s sci-fi unless someone has thrown a Cold War parallel in your face and beaten you over the head with a "Give Peace A Chance" message while you're still reeling. (Rod Serling was a master of those, as anybody who watched Sci-Fi's 4th of July Zone-a-thon will tell you.)

Although I will say that, with the benefit of hindsight, I much prefer the ST:TNG convention of just doing the costume-heavy episodes on the holodeck to inventing highly implausible Earth-If-Only planets (right down to the topography, sometimes!) and scattering them around the galaxy...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 4:08pm

I agree with Ajax here. The costume episodes were kinda fun, but the parallel development premise was pretty thin.

At least in the Nazi episode and the Gangster episode the development occurred because of Earth influence, whereas all the native american episodes and the Roman episode was just nutty.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 6:47pm

The Native American episodes could be defended as reflecting any basic, mostly agrarian culture. Plus, it provided an opportunity for Kirk to shack up with the Land'O'Lakes girl.

Agreed that the overtly Roman world was just stupid. The Nazi planet too (although that ep wasn't too bad). I'd love to go back in time to the 1967 script meetings and scrawl on the blackboard: "SUBTLETY - look it up. Your audience isn't as dumb as you think it is."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

7/09/09 9:26pm

@meyer:

For some reason your mention of the lovely 'Land o' Lakes' girl made me flash on a mix of that episode and the butter scene in 'Last Tango in Paris', only with margarine...

wow... just, wow...

thanks, man...

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)The Pizza Monster

7/10/09 12:57am

Having seen that comment just before bedtime, I know what I'M gonna be dreaming of tonight. . . .

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

2/21/14 8:16pm

It's goofy and ridiculous... but to me that's what makes it funny.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 11:07am

Maybe Zach should adopt the pseudonym...

...Swearie McSwearerson.

I mean Jesus.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:12am

So, he should adopt the pseudonym "Jesus", is that what you mean?

Good idea. Fuck Sweary McSwearerson.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:18am

No, see "Swearie McSwearerson" would be his name. Because he swears a lot. And to punctuate how much I thought he swore, I included an exclamatory sentence of my own, to wit: "I mean Jesus." Perhaps it should have said "I mean, Jesus!" See, its funny because I'm juxtaposing faux outrage with someone else's blue humor with profanity of my own. Get it?

Oh, hell with it.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:21am

I have no idea what the fuck you are talking about.

(Actually, I do, I was just having a larf about your word choice. I mean, Jesus Fucking Christ!!)

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:11pm

I think Jesus fucking Christ is physically impossible. But then again, hey, he's Jesus.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:31pm

Any religion that can split an infinite, omnipresent deity up into three separate (but somehow also not separate) components, in direct conflict with the very first of their ten most sacred commandments, can probably figure something out.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:32pm

Ah, the eternal paradox. Can Jesus invent a sex act so difficult that he is incapable of performing it?

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 1:54pm

Isn't it just Jesus jacking off?

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 2:14pm

No. Snow is Jesus jacking off.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 2:54pm

I heart you, Gentle Herpes. Don't ever stop.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 9:09pm

" I mean Jesus"...

With all due respect, I think you mean to say 'I am the Mean Jesus', as opposed to the lovable peaceful one.

Did Christ go through some sort of 'Turnabout Intruder' thingy in one of the book of the Bible I'm not familiar with? That would go a long way towards explaining how 'Jesus fucking Christ' would be possible, though I'd prefer 'Jesus is fucking Christ (right now, but he'll get back to you...)

Of course, it goes without saying that the good Jesus would not be fucking Christ, but would rather make love to him. This would be a good way to tell them apart and know which one to shoot with your phaser.

Gawd, I love Theology!

signed,  
Richelieu Jr, Doctor of Theology  
Sorbonne, Paris

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/10/09 10:25am

I think I have already covered the fact that correct punctuation should have been:

"I mean, Jesus!"

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/10/09 7:39pm

So you're telling Jesus that you're mean as in 'I am mean, Jesus'?  
I'm so confused...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/12/09 12:03pm

Me John, Big Tree!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 10:40am

I love hats!  
I wish they'd come back. I'd totally wear one to work all the time.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 10:42am

Right?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:04am

Snuh?

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:14am



Huh? Yes hat's would be cool again, but then you'd have to have a slick suit too, and I think we've gone to far in the "work casual" mode for people to wear them again.

Although Indy rocks the hat and khakis, picture the slob in the cubicle next to you trying to pull it off. Or the Aston Kutcher-esqe douchetoid trying to be Rat Pack cool in but in hipster jeans... I dunno the hat's dicey unless there' a suit involved.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 11:19am

Ah, that's where you and I part company. Because, you see, I am forced by the Man and convention to wear a suit every day. So, the hat would just be a bonus.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:16pm

Come on, guys...if we're bringing back headwear let's not do it half-assed. Viking helmets for all.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:26pm

Try rocking one then, my friend. If you're already wearing a suit, you could start a trend! And then this sick society might be on the mend. The end.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 12:55pm

@JBMD, so if you're rocking the suit then wear the hat, why wait for it to "come back"? My crowd wears jeans/slacks to work, it wouldn't work for us. Though I don't leave the house without a black sports jacket. And athletic cup(over the jeans)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 1:44pm

If I started wearing hats, and I was the only one, I'd be Dick Cheney.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 4:20pm

Don't sneer, you'll be in the clear.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 5:41pm

Also, I think I'd involuntarily make Penguin noises:

Whah! Whah!

[Reply](#)

- [Darth Weevil](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/09/09 9:07pm

I wore a hat about twice a few years ago. I felt way too self-conscious. Though it was nice the one day when it was snowing.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/10/09 6:48am

I wear a hat regularly, a sort of Pete Docherty affair at a rakish angle. And yes I wear it to work, although I do get to go to work in jeans and a t-shirt, so that does make life easier. Why are we discussing this again?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/10/09 10:13am

Does this hat make my head look big?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/11/09 3:02pm

Here's your head, what's your hurry?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 8:33pm

3rd Time at Bat

Well, I finally got one of the new, 'improved' box sets, sadly the third season. The quality is indeed quite improved and the new FX, though quite 'digital' looking, are unobtrusive and generally pretty good... It sounds good as well and the interface is less annoying than on the old Blue, Yellow, Red set...

That's the good news; I was very excited to be able to show my girlfriend some TOS subtitled in French (TOS wasn't shown here in France until 1982. The result is that most French people think it is intentionally kitschy, as if it had really been made at that time... Hell, TNG only got here around 1998!)

I looked over the programme listings (difficult as the titles are in French and most have no relation whatsoever to the English) 'Le Cerveau de Spock' rocked my world as a young'un, but it is certainly not the point to start someone you're trying to convince that TOS wasn't just silly camp. For the same reason 'Le Chemin d'Eden' seemed counter-indicated. Trop 'baba -cool', man!

It came down to a toss-up between, 'Au-Dela du Far-West' (literally 'Beyond the Far-West'— 'Spectre of the Gun', for those of you scoring at home), and my final choice 'Le piege des Tholiens' (The Tholien Thingy), which I'd found brilliant as a kid. The FX were really nice, I thought, updated but not intrusively modern... The story however was... disappointing, not to say boring.

The third season seems to be worse than I'd remembered (and I've stood up for it in these here parts more than once..) Here's hoping we find the wheat amongst the dross. Why, oh why were the first two seasons sold out?! D'oh!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

7/10/09 1:25pm

Looking forward to: "Pour le monde est creux, et j'ai touche le ciel"

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

7/10/09 1:29pm

The French have no imagination. "For the world is hollow and I have touched the sky" becomes "Au bout de l'Infini", or "after infinity". Boring!

In fact, most of the French translations of the episode titles seem to strip out the poetry. They sound like TNG episodes. "All our yesterdays" becomes "Le Passe", or "The past". What's wrong with "tout de nous hieres"?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/10/09 7:27pm

Hioya Alurin!

I was just going to correct your translation of "For the World is Hollow" but you beat me too it..

The worst is when the French trade in one English title for another one, that they understand... But they are geniuses at screwing up things. They love to say out loud in the title what the idea is, and sometimes they even screw that up. The example that springs to mind is a rather forgettable film from the nineties which is called 'Threesome'. Now, I imagine your average American would translate that as 'Menage a Trois' and for once, that wouldn't be too far off— The French: 'Une fille, deux garçons, trois possibilités' or 'One girl, two guys, three possibilities'. Now you all know I'm not so great at maths, but it seems to me this is a bit off. Let's see: there's everyone together; then one guy, the girl and then the other guy goes away; the two guys and the girl splits; the other guy goes..etc...

On the trek side we have in season 3 'Clin d'Oeil' or 'Wink'.. Who can guess what that one is?

Oh, and it's true that they liked Galactica (the original) but to be fair, BSG actually predates TOS by several years out there so it seems like a tacky imitation...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

7/11/09 11:21am

I suppose translation generally comes with a loss of poetry, but the TOS episode titles are generally so good (better than the episodes), whilst the French translations are so mind-numbingly boring.... I'm sure there are plenty of examples of French titles getting lost in translation as well.

So did the Germans get Star Trek in the 60s or did they have to wait like the French?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/11/09 2:53pm

Nope, they got it a bit earlier, mid-70's or with the first movie, I don't remember. I saw it on TV there (in East Berlin!) in 1982...

They've got their own problems with titles though. Because they're so damn literal, they have to know what kind of film it is by the title. They won't wait for a by-line or sub-heading, it's gotta be right there. Thus 'Airplane' which we understand to be a humorous (your mileage may vary) take on the 'Airport' franchise, they translate as something like 'The Incredible fight on the crazy, mixed-up Airplane'

And as to your comment about your treatment of French films, it's much better. Even when we do the old 'It's French so let's come up with a new title IN FRENCH!' thingy, it's more like 'Nikita' becomes 'La Femme, Nikita' No harm, no foul. 'Je Vous Salue Marie' 'Hail Mary'. Exact. 'La Nuit Americaine' becomes 'Day For Night', which may seem strange, but that's what the French call the old process of shooting at dusk and palming it off as night. Those blue nights with shadows we're all so fond of are called 'American nights' in French...

So, yay for l'Oncle Sam!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

7/11/09 6:23pm

It sounds like an apocryphal story to me, but the DVD extras for the first James Bond movie claim that a publicist typed 'Dr. No' instead of 'Dr. No' for some press material in Japan, and thus the Japanese debut of James Bond was titled, 'We Have No Need For A Doctor'.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/13/09 12:27am

Well, sometimes these 'too good to be true' stories are really true. I know for a fact that one of the stories of why McDonalds had to have to go to the French market was do to a translation error. They (like Disney) are very sophisticated cats when it comes to marketing and they made sure to translate heir menu (as you can see in Pulp Fiction- even though it's not a 'Royal with Cheese', but rather a 'Royale Cheese') Metric conversions aside, they had another problem and it took them a couple of months to solve it. long enough to want to roll up operation and give it a new start a bit later.

They couldn't understand why the 'Big Mac', their biggest seller everywhere else onthe planet wasn't selling well. After all, they'd had it translated, with 'gros' substituting for 'big' Le Gros Mac. No problem, right? Only, 'Mac' in French is short for Macquereaux which means pimp!

Would you like fries with your Fat Pimp?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr

7/13/09 10:45am

Hmm.... if they retranslated it in America, I'll be the Fat Pimp would be a big hit!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

7/13/09 11:20am

I'll stick with Big Kahuna Burger.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/13/09 12:10pm

Whattaya think 'Big Kahuna' means in Hawaian, anyways?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 11:04am

Fucking Nintendo Game, etc.

Anyone else remember that damned Nintendo Star Trek game, where the point was that the communicator allowed the Iotians to become starship capable in a few years, and they start blasting their way through the galaxy? The crew has to go back in time to just after they left the planet to get the communicator back. In great, fucked up Nintendo fashion, the entire thing relies on you stopping a random guy running out of a store the minute you hit their planet, or you can never win the thing. And it was so quick, you never even thought it was important until you spent hours trying to find the damned communicator the guy had in his pocket? And it didn't let you go back to just the start of that section...no...you had to fight that damned Romulan ship that kicks your ass unless you're lucky enough to...

Sorry.

Much more and less seriously, the reason the Vulcans don't understand defeat is that they were a warrior race at one point who did, in fact, conquer parts of the galaxy before the switched over to a logical society. Their infighting threatened to destroy their race before they made the switch. And a starship full of Vulcans? Don't tell me that wasn't fun once the heat and hormones of Vulcan marriage rituals got going.

[Reply](#)

- [The Quirk](#)blasmo

7/09/09 11:20am

I seem to recall a Genesis TNG game that had a similar take on "Piece", but, in True Trek Tradition, had you running Picard and Data through interminable fucking mazes to get through it. Christ, I hated that game.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)blasmo

7/09/09 11:23am

Was there a level in a briefing room? With expansive exposition? And an idiotic graphic ("See here's this big area of space, and the Romulan ship is to the right of us as evidenced by this monitor with a giant Federation symbol on the left and a Romulan symbol on the right.")

If so, I'm totally there!

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)blasmo

7/09/09 11:48am

The best game was the original Star Trek text wargame, where you flew through a two-dimensional universe fighting Klingons in each sector. "Type 3 to fire Phasers. Enter amount of energy to use:". Classic.

+++

+++

Fire that Photon Torpedo at angle "4" then let's dock at the starbase, quick!

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo

7/09/09 11:51am

Yes, it may have been a Next Generation game. I am sure it ended up somewhere about 100 feet from my house after I threw it out of the backyard. It was one of those "That's IT??!! That's all there is??!!" moments in gaming.

Then it was back to Bionic Commando.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)blasmo

7/09/09 12:19pm

It's all about A Final Unity. But, yeah, Star Trek games have historically been really terrible. I also liked Elite Force, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)blasmo

7/09/09 12:30pm

I knew about Vulcan wars and infighting, but was it stated they conquered other parts of the galaxy? I'm getting a level 3 nerd alert on that one.

[Reply](#)

- [Utahraptor](#)blasmo

7/09/09 1:19pm

@ DAAP

That game inducted me into a lifetime of time-wasting entertainment when my father introduced me to it in the Air Force computer lab's IBM Mainframe in the late 70s. No video monitor, just paper printouts of the results. I remember being thrilled when it came out for the Apple II a few years later and you could actually watch your photon torpedo make its texty asterisk way down the screen toward the enemy.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo

7/09/09 1:26pm

The Vulcan stuff comes to me second-hand from a seriously scary Star Trek fan I used to know. It's entirely possible that he, and then me, are incorrect about this. There's also this blue Star Trek book that came out after the first movie that purported to be a legit history of the Star Trek universe that mentioned something about it.

You know, my self-esteem is just plowing to the bottom as I write this stuff...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)blasmo

7/09/09 9:18pm

At any rate, if their violent natures threatened to destroy them, I think it's fair to guess that's because they had more than a few defeats in there, not just a bunch of tie games...

And I also played that old IBM Trek game and I was SO IMPRESSED! The fact that you had to read the info and it took a moment to arrive somehow made it all the more credible to my little mind... I was imagining that that's what the future would really be like, in space, trusting readouts, waiting for the results.. Did my photons hit the Klingon cruiser or not?

Of course it helped that I had some 'adult' (read, at least 19) Uber-nerds showing me the ropes and 'granting me access' to their game as I was such a Trekkie... It did get me interested in Basic and trying to make my own little 'if/then' games that no one would play more than once... I actually looked down on Space Invaders, etc, when they came out because they weren't as pure and intellectual as the 'real' games.

What a putz!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 1:55pm

Nerd Alert

Another throwback to TOS they did in Enterprise: Mayweather's parents are in command of the cargo vessel Horizon. During the episode they were on, in one of the cabins, is the Chicago Mobs book left behind on Sigma Iotia II. While they never actually go there in the series, in the books they do, and happen to trade The Book for some food supplies.

Oh, and in the case of Spock feeling the deaths of the Vulcans on the Intrepid \*\*\*\*\*SPOILERS\*\*\*\*\* I wonder what they hell he, and the other Vulcans, felt in the new movie after the whole damn planet goes.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Right Wingnut

7/09/09 3:07pm

I wondered about that, too. You'd think that for someone watching and feeling a planet implode at the same time—well, the sensations could be conflated. But how many of the estimated 10,000 survivors were evacuees, and how many of them were actually elsewhere at the time, and how did the latter experience the destruction? And also, could I find a less important and more nerdy use of my brain power? I'll take suggestions.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut

7/09/09 4:10pm

Luckily, I like both Star Trek and action movies, so I thought the new film was a hoot.

Plus, 50% less briefings!

[Reply](#)

- [Come On In Here](#)Right Wingnut

7/09/09 4:45pm

Spock was emotionally compromised.

And Hank Williams IV. I hope you watch this...

<http://tinyurl.com/coxd2s>

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Right Wingnut

7/09/09 4:58pm

That was great.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

7/09/09 8:48pm

Wow, I'd never have caught that. Currently watching Enterprise again with my goilfiend (TNG is only for me, at least u til it gets bearable on a regular basis). Even as a known defender of the series, I've gotta say it's better than I'd remembered.

I'd heard he'd been on the cargo ship, even the name, but nothing clicked... That sort of in-reference can become a little too pat, but I do get a kick out of it. It's like Hitch's little cameos in his films before they got to be too much and he just had to do one quickly to get it out o the way so that people would pay attention to the story...

Is there a list of these little 'homages' to TOS anywhere? Are there any other like that on the other series? (I've seen about 1/2 of DS9 and about a 3rd of Voyager)

[Reply](#)

- [Newc0253](#)Right Wingnut

7/10/09 7:10am

What did Spock feel when Vulcan got destroyed, you ask?

I dunno, but I suspect he felt as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror and were suddenly silenced.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut

7/10/09 7:17am

@ John Barleycorn - 50% less briefings are good for the waistline AND the soul! Nice one, dude!

@Richelieu Jr - All Star Treks are littered with references to the past, some explicit (Scotty on the bridge of the old Enterprise in TNG!), some rather less so (like the Horizon reference in Enterprise). I also don't have a problem with it, I think they are nice little nods to the past, and help re-enforce the idea that this all takes place in one consistant universe, without just having endless gratuitous continuity references, which are fanwanky and understandably offputting to non-fans. I think the movie, for what it's worth, gets the balance prety much right.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

7/10/09 10:04am

Yeah, I liked all the references I caught int he new movie. It's funny, having literally grown up with Trek (we're the same age!) and having been a crazy fan through most of my youth, how small my knowledge and fandom is ont he Trek scale of things. I consider myself a pretty clever fellow, but most of this shot goes right past me, and I'm not sure that's totlaly a bad thing; i enjoy what I get and it doesn't take me out of the story.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Right Wingnut

7/10/09 1:20pm

@PM: "several episodes of early TNG are direct remakes or rewrites of TOS episodes. Not so much homages as direct, conscious rip-offs."

This is because for the first season of TNG Roddenberry was still in charge, and he hadn't had an original idea in decades.

TNG does feature the return of characters such as Scotty, Spock, and (best of all) Sarek (not to mention the McCoy cameo in "Encounter at Farpoint"), but otherwise there are fewer callbacks than in Enterprise, or even DS9 (which had a tribble episode and a mirror universe episode)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cajun Clearwater](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:41pm

GFSA

I dug the GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMOEBA. It's one of the coolest ideas Star Trek ever had. The idea of a single creature that big, totally indifferent to our form of life, really nails why maybe we should fear the unknown a little. Sure, there might be green space tramps out there, but you might also run into GFSAs or other Lovecraftian beasts. Or Q.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Cajun Clearwater

7/09/09 4:53pm

DAMMIT. I was gonna comment on that way this morning, and then my phone rang, etc. etc. I luh-uve the GFSA. You know what I REALLY liked? - not everyone reacted the same. Some fainted, some didn't. That seemed more real to me. Anyway, great write-up on one of my favorite eps.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Cajun Clearwater

7/09/09 6:58pm

With "Solaris" still in mind from another recent AV Club article, it would be a blast to combine ideas from "Immunity Syndrome" with "Shore Leave" and create a dark, Solaris-type Trek episode (especially with a crew of 430 - wow!).

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Cajun Clearwater

7/09/09 7:40pm

...and throw in a little Lovecraft, and you got a MOVIE, my friend!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Cajun Clearwater

7/09/09 8:24pm

Get started on the screenplay, Tits. I'm strictly an "Ideas Guy".

So long as they find someone other than Abrams to direct the damn thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Cajun Clearwater

7/09/09 8:57pm

I love the idea that the whole beastie is one single cell! It' slied it could splitup and become something even larger!

On a related note, I remember reading in 'The Electric Koolaid Acid test' about the idea that because amoebas simply divide into two, that the original amoeba from the original primordial ocean (redundant, I know, live with it) is still living, out there somewhere... Maybe this is it!



"Evolution left him behind! They called him simple! Primitive! But now he's back and he wants REVENGE!!!" (of course all amoebas are 'he'. It's a scientific fact signed off on by all official scientists of the fifties.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:45pm

Short and sweet.

Best moment of "Action": The face Spock pulls in the radio station, while preparing to use the transmitter to contact the ship, after hearing the gabby disc jockey. Worst moment of "Action": Kirk talking like Edward G. Robinson during the last five minutes of the show, for no justifiable reason. Even as someone prepared to give Shatner a wide degree of latitude for hamming it up, I cringe every time.

"Immunity" is a good one, but a couple moments that occur within a pretty short timespan always manage to kill my buzz.

Firstly, when McCoy and Spock get into it just before Spock leaves on the shuttlecraft, it's really hard to ignore the sign indicating they're standing outside the "HANGER DECK." (Doubtless that's where the spare uniforms are kept.)

Secondly, in his first report from the shuttle, Spock makes a point of telling McCoy "you would not have survived it [the impact with the space amoeba]." That's always struck me as kind of bitchy — and made even moreso by the fact that as seen on the screen, the impact amounted to a minor prat-fall on the deck.

Sure, Spock will take the occasional opportunity to tweak the irascible doctor — generally as a means of getting some of his own back when McCoy's been riding him — but that kind of passive-aggressiveness in a moment of extreme peril just doesn't ring true IMO. "That'll teach the old geezer to volunteer for a dangerous mission when his biological knowlege would be helpful! He could have broken a hip!"

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Ajax

7/09/09 6:31pm

I read Spock's comment a little differently. To my mind, Spock is simply stating to McCoy that he shouldn't feel offended about not being allowed to go on the mission, since it would have ended right then if he had. Also, you can read it as Spock emphasizing that he doesn't have a martyr complex and doesn't \*want\* to die or sacrifice himself, just that he was the only logical choice to go.

But yeah, like Zack, I'm surprised Kirk (who does have something of a martyr complex, I think) didn't take the mission on himself.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax

7/09/09 8:51pm

I agree that Spock is simply affirming that they made the only logical choice, not having a go...

That said, I'm less surprised by the character of Kirk acting like a captain for once than I am by the fact that the screenwriters passed up the obvious manner of amping up the drama. Good for them.

[Reply](#)

- [Come On In Here](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 4:49pm

Band name

Giant F\*\*\*ing Space Ameoba IS a good name for a rock band, but not for a good rock band.

[Reply](#)

- [gee-man](#)Come On In Here

7/10/09 2:11pm

I dunno man, I saw them play at the Metro and they raaaaawwwwwwwked!

[Reply](#)

- [Dripping yellow madness](#)Come On In Here

7/10/09 5:37pm

Not nearly as good as "The Criterion Collection of Junk Food". My team of lawyers is already looking into that one.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Come On In Here

7/11/09 2:54pm

DYM: I actually prefer "My Team of Lawyers" as a name.. I hope you don't mind...

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Zack Handlen

7/10/09 6:02pm

no love for Fizzbin?

Oh, come on! That's comedy gold! I always hope for a shralk when I'm playing cards. On Tuesday. When it's dark.

"Spock, what are the odds of getting a royal fizzbin?"

"I have never computed them."

"Well, they're astronomical."

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Hornacek

7/10/09 7:21pm

Spock's line, "You have just used a double-negative" made me chuckle. The grammar police are alive and well in the 23rd century. And for good reason.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Hornacek

7/11/09 2:46pm

Kirk's reading of "Astronomical" is great; I used to repeat than ad nauseum as a kid...

[Reply](#)

- [Colonel ClinQ](#)Hornacek

7/12/09 12:16pm

Except on a Tuesday

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 8:20pm

Heaters

Boy oh boy, did I love me some 'A Piece of the Action' as a tyke! I thought it was hilarious and I'm glad to see you think it holds up...

That 'giant space amoeba' (minus the fucking) was exactly how I'd classed this episode in my childhood 'Trek by the Monsters' scale (starting, of course with 'The Incredible Salt Vampire', then 'The Buttheads', 'Vomit Monster', etc...) I really liked it, but I haven't seen it in ages and for some reason I'd decided it was one of the lame ones...

You mention that the old FX hold up.. Were you implying that the enw ones don't?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

7/09/09 8:32pm

I don't think Zack is watching the new CGI-ified versions, Richelieu. While I really wish that the DVDs I have used the original SFX, the GFSA looked just as I remembered it. Of course, the entirely-black viewscreen looks just the way I remembered it too.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/13/09 12:28am

I've only got season 3, and I find the FX quite nicely integrated, but I have to admit, the original FX don't bother me a tall.

What does is the dirty prints and poor transfers...

[Reply](#)

- [flaming-arrow Frogurt](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:21pm

I say we take of and lightly phaser stun them from orbit  
It's the only way to be sure.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)flaming-arrow Frogurt

7/10/09 11:36am

It's the only way to be sure.

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)flaming-arrow Frogurt

7/10/09 6:00pm

Why don't we build a fire? Sing some songs?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)flaming-arrow Frogurt

7/11/09 2:59pm

How 'about, 'Row, row, your boat'? I love that song!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 6:39pm

Immunity Syndrome Biology 101

Don't want to sound like a snickering 13-year-old, but the way they constantly described entering and infiltrating the GFSA, I halfway expected the Enterprise to become a father by the end of the episode. Imagine a GFSA with pointy ears...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer

7/09/09 8:38pm

GFSA meaning, of course, 'GirlFriend's Sex Area'...

I can't imagine where you get this shit from Meyer, you're really a sick individual.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

7/09/09 9:43pm

The kids I hang out with in school are a bunch of morons. What can I say?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

7/10/09 7:43pm

FACEBOOK LINK IS DRIVING ME MAD!!!!

Zack, please tell your evil overlords that it's real drag to have FaceBook box open up everytime you try and leave a comment asking if you want to establish a link and then when you say 'no', it closes until you next comment...

You may have finally found away to get me to cut donw on my comment ('Yay!' says the peanut gallery)

IT IS REALLY ANNOYING!!!!!!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr

7/10/09 8:40pm

AGREED. This shit started tonight and it's really pissing me off.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

7/11/09 2:42pm

I should have said Zack's evil 'Handers' (rims-shot! Handlen-ers? hmmm...)

[Reply](#)

- [Spessartine](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:35pm

Unflattering imitations

Now, maybe the ol' story-from-far-away-becoming-our-entire-culture convention has been used in other media before TOS, but I first encountered it in Star Trek, and now all later uses (I'm looking at your teddy bears from outer space, Gordon R. Dickson) seem to be rather directly inspired by Trek. The heroes even seem Kirk-ish, as they pass through confusion and eye-rolling acceptance to playing along.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Spessartine

7/09/09 2:58pm

The recurrent use of the ol' story-from-far-away-becoming-our-entire-culture convention in TOS is one of the many things that makes Galaxy Quest so fun.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 11:45am

Transtator, not translator, I think

I haven't watched the actual episodes in a while, but the critical technological doohickey is the transtator, which is somehow important for the communicator, phasers, tricorder, transporter and whatever else.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)partdavid

7/09/09 12:27pm

I think you're right. It's like a transistor, but with some kind of super-duper power handling quality to it that allows pretty much all of their fancy gizmos to work.

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

[Reply](#)

- [The Immortal Goon](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 4:27pm

Unified Society

"Okay, so a global unified society wouldn't really work that early in a society's development, but since these episodes work better when you view the "planets" as "countries," let's think in those terms."

Vulcan has no oceans in the sense that Earth does, and their society was under a single ideology early enough to become advanced enough to send the Romulans on their merry way. When the Vulcans discovered Earth we were made up of fragmented savages, some living in Montana as drunks trying to make money, and some living through the Post Atomic Horror. The first thing they do to help us is to unify the planet - so maybe from a Vulcan's perspective maybe a united planet is the only way for progress to happen.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Immortal Goon

7/09/09 8:39pm

Or it could just be something they made up!

[Reply](#)

- [Tyrannorabbit](#)Zack Handlen

4/12/12 9:03pm

"Ship's log, Mr. Spock reporting. As incredible as it seems, Dr. McCoy and I are once again prisoners of the chief criminal boss of a society patterned after old Earth gangsters."

This quote is why this episode is the most fun I've had watching Trek yet.

[Reply](#)

- [Tyrannorabbit](#)Tyrannorabbit

4/13/12 8:45pm

One day later and I'm still giggling about it - I think this is the single funniest Trek line ever.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:45pm

Short and sweet.

Best moment of "Action": The face Spock pulls in the radio station, while preparing to use the transmitter to contact the ship, after hearing the gabby disc jockey. Worst moment of "Action": Kirk talking like Edward G. Robinson during the last five minutes of the show, for no justifiable reason. Even as someone prepared to give Shatner a wide degree of latitude for hamming it up, I cringe every time.

"Immunity" is a good one, but a couple moments that occur within a pretty short timespan always manage to kill my buzz.

Firstly, when McCoy and Spock get into it just before Spock leaves on the shuttlecraft, it's really hard to ignore the sign indicating they're standing outside the "HANGER DECK." (Doubtless that's where the spare uniforms are kept.)

Secondly, in his first report from the shuttle, Spock makes a point of telling McCoy "you would not have survived it [the impact with the space amoeba]." That's always struck me as kind of bitchy — and made even moreso by the fact that as seen on the screen, the impact amounted to a minor prat-fall on the deck.

Sure, Spock will take the occasional opportunity to tweak the irascible doctor — generally as a means of getting some of his own back when McCoy's been riding him — but that kind of passive-aggressiveness in a moment of extreme peril just doesn't ring true IMO. "That'll teach the old geezer to volunteer for a dangerous mission when his biological knowlege would be helpful! He could have broken a hip!"

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 11:04am

Fucking Nintendo Game, etc.

Anyone else remember that damned Nintendo Star Trek game, where the point was that the communicator allowed the Iotians to become starship capable in a few years, and they start blasting their way through the galaxy? The crew has to go back in time to just after they left the planet to get the communicator back. In great, fucked up Nintendo fashion, the entire thing relies on you stopping a random guy running out of a store the minute you hit their planet, or you can never win the thing. And it was so quick, you never even thought it was important until you spent hours trying to find the damned communicator the guy had in his pocket? And it didn't let you go back to just the start of that section...no...you had to fight that damned Romulan ship that kicks your ass unless you're lucky enough to...

Sorry.

Much more and less seriously, the reason the Vulcans don't understand defeat is that they were a warrior race at one point who did, in fact, conquer parts of the galaxy before they switched over to a logical society. Their infighting threatened to destroy their race before they made the switch. And a starship full of Vulcans? Don't tell me that wasn't fun once the heat and hormones of Vulcan marriage rituals got going.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

7/11/09 6:33pm

A Couple of Comments on A Piece O' the Action

This episode held up a lot better than I feared it would. It's actually an interesting story idea, and the laughs work just great. And as luck would have it, I caught Futurama's "Bender Gets Made" the same night (thanks to all of you who quote that show and drew it to my attention... I missed it the first time around and I'm really enjoying it on DVD - almost done with Season 2).

Twice during "A Piece of the Action", Kirk or Spock pulls one or the other out of the way of a car - made me think of poor Edith.

I liked seeing Spock and McCoy beaming down as a team to save the good captain.

[Reply](#)

- [Patrick DiJusto](#)Zack Handlen

2/24/13 1:25am

When ST:DS9 wanted to do an anniversary episode, they looked back at several classic Treks to see which ones could be "updated". They eventually went with "The Trouble With Tribbles", but one of the ideas bounced around was a return to Sigma Iotia II. The idea was that Kirk and Spock were so disruptive to the society, everyone tried to imitate them. When the DS9 crew arrived at the planet, it would be like a giant Star Trek convention: the entire population dressed as either Kirk or Spock (with fake Vulcan ears), either speaking in! punctuated! sentences!, or pretending to give each other vulcan neck pinches.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 1:55pm

Nerd Alert

Another throwback to TOS they did in Enterprise: Mayweather's parents are in command of the cargo vessel Horizon. During the episode they were on, in one of the cabins, is the Chicago Mobs book left behind on Sigma Iotia II. While they never actually go there in the series, in the books they do, and happen to trade The Book for some food supplies.

Oh, and in the case of Spock feeling the deaths of the Vulcans on the Intrepid \*\*\*\*\*SPOILERS\*\*\*\*\* I wonder what they hell he, and the other Vulcans, felt in the new movie after the whole damn planet goes.

[Reply](#)

- [Spessartine](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:35pm

Unflattering imitations

Now, maybe the ol' story-from-far-away-becoming-our-entire-culture convention has been used in other media before TOS, but I first encountered it in Star Trek, and now all later uses (I'm looking at your teddy bears from outer space, Gordon R. Dickson) seem to be rather directly inspired by Trek. The heroes even seem Kirk-ish, as they pass through confusion and eye-rolling acceptance to playing along.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 2:14pm

Immunity Syndrome

Glad to see you liked it, Zack. For some reason, it never seems to get the love that it deserves, but I've always found it to one of my very very favorite TOS episodes.

I've always loved the utter silliness of "A Piece of the Action," too. Of all of the "Enterprise Crew Visits Film Genre Planets" episodes, it's the one that fully embraces the absurdity of the premise.

[Reply](#)

- [David R Tribble](#)Zack Handlen

2/03/17 6:27pm

"But that's not how we do things on the Enterprise." Of course not. We don't have to be told that the U.S.S. Enterprise is the best starship and the finest crew in the whole fleet. We don't have a show about the second-best ship in the fleet. This is a show where we really do look up to these characters, and want to be as good as them, because they always do The Right Thing.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 2:14pm

Immunity Syndrome

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[Reply](#)

- [Cajun Clearwater](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:41pm

GFSA

I dug the GIANT FUCKING SPACE AMOEBA. It's one of the coolest ideas Star Trek ever had. The idea of a single creature that big, totally indifferent to our form of life, really nails why maybe we should fear the unknown a little. Sure, there might be green space tramps out there, but you might also run into GFSA's or other Lovecraftian beasts. Or Q.

[Reply](#)

- [craigvan](#)Zack Handlen

5/10/13 8:51am

I think the series couldn't have gone for much longer than it did. They already encountered too many ridiculous premises and parallel earths in three seasons.

Some law of "parallel planet development" led the Iotians to invent the same Tommy gun we have on Earth. Perhaps there was a picture in "The Book", but Kirk drove a Cadillac v12 from around 1930 Detroit.

[Reply](#)

- [goat](#)Zack Handlen

4/13/13 2:49pm

Re-watching this, I noticed that Oxmyx has absolutely no idea how to play pool.

Things I should probably ignore, but seemed troubling: How does Uhura respond to Spock when he's transmitting over the radio? Is there a receiver in the room tuned to a station that Uhura is aware of? And how does the ship locate the people on the receiving end of a phone call?

[Reply](#)

- [Eric JA](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 2:54pm

A Piece of The Syndic

Anyone else ever read "The Syndic" by C.M. Kornbluth? It's an SF novel from the '50s where The Mob has taken over the U.S. and become the new Government, and are doing a pretty good job, actually (at least on the East Coast).

I wonder if that was an influence on "A Piece of the Action."

[Reply](#)

- [Eric JA](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 2:54pm

A Piece of The Syndic

Anyone else ever read "The Syndic" by C.M. Kornbluth? It's an SF novel from the '50s where The Mob has taken over the U.S. and become the new Government, and are doing a pretty good job, actually (at least on the East Coast).

I wonder if that was an influence on "A Piece of the Action."

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Zack Handlen

7/10/09 6:03pm

Cover him, Spocko.

I remember a Star Trek drinking game from the early 90s (it just covered TOS and TNG). You had to take 4 drinks every time Kirk called Spock "Spocko".

There was also fun stuff like "Worf sings - 2 drinks" and "Worf sings Klingon opera - 4 drinks"

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 11:45am

Transtator, not translator, I think

I haven't watched the actual episodes in a while, but the critical technological doohickey is the transtator, which is somehow important for the communicator, phasers, tricorder, transporter and whatever else.

[Reply](#)

- [Aler](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 10:56am

Memo for J.J. Abrams

Keeping with the tone of the original series, I'd love to see the gangster planet pop up in the next Star Trek film. Or the Nazi planet. Or the cowboy planet. Or the other cowboy planet.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

2/21/14 8:15pm

I thought A Piece of the Action was hilarious. Definitely the funniest episode I've watched of Star Trek.



[Reply](#)

- [flaming-arrow Frogurt](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 12:21pm

I say we take of and lightly phaser stun them from orbit  
It's the only way to be sure.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/09/09 10:40am

I love hats!  
I wish they'd come back. I'd totally wear one to work all the time.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Zack Handlen

7/10/09 2:49pm

Racecars, lasers, aeroplanes...  
Doot dooooo. Doot Dooooo.

[Reply](#)

- [Claudia Trent](#)Zack Handlen

7/29/17 1:48pm

What can I say about this episode? Hmmm . . . crap.

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/08/16 12:29am

No mention of Mel, the cook from Alice?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "A Private Little War" / "Return To Tomorrow"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published July 16, 2009

[Comments \(83\)](#)



A more political minded fella than myself could make some good hay out of the premise of the first part of this week's double feature. "A Private Little War" has Kirk revisiting a pastoral society and finding that things have changed considerably since his last trip; they've gotten more violent. The question becomes, what responsibility does he have to the people he left behind, and how far should he go to fix things? Civilizations don't develop at the same rate, and it's human nature to want to interfere with your neighbor, especially when that neighbor lives in cave and still thinks sticks and stones are a really good idea. But it's impossible to see to the end of things, and no matter how good your intentions are, there's no telling what a couple of guns and some helpful physics lesson might lead to.

The "non-interference directive" has come up on the series before, but "War" is the most serious we've gotten on the subject. It's a surprisingly ambiguous take on the issue, too; impossible to say for sure how much of that ambiguity was intentional, but I left "War" with a bad taste in my mouth, for all the right reasons. (Wow, there are a lot of really horrible jokes I could make right here, aren't there.)

Things start off with a bang. In the first ten minutes, Kirk learns that the peaceful locals have gone from bows and arrows to flintlock rifles, he and Spock break up an ambush, Spock gets shot, they beam back up to the *Enterprise* where Spock's life is in danger, and there's evidence that there's a Klingon ship in the area. That's all before the opening credits. After the credits, Kirk and McCoy beam back down to the planet so Kirk can make contact with Tyree, Kirk's old friend back from his first trip to the planet. Kirk gets attacked by a local beastie called a *mugato*, which is actually pretty effectively weird, at least by *TOS* standards; a guy in a white gorilla suit with spines sticking out the back and a horn on his head. It's goofy, but it's plausibly goofy, if you follow. The thing manages to take Kirk down and poisons him with it's talons before McCoy zaps it with a phaser.

Oh, about the phaser use; Spock goes to great pains to keep Kirk from firing his phaser while he's on the planet. Non-interference means blending in (which doesn't explain why they're wearing regular Starfleet uniforms; I doubt the original plan was to meet Tyree, but why risk being seen?), and that means that using highly advanced weapons in front of the natives is a no-no. One of the nice things about the episode is that, without anybody making a big deal of it,

Spock's concern is proven well-founded. McCoy shows precious few reservations about using his phaser when the need dictates, and while it was almost certainly necessary that he use it on the *mugato* to save Kirk's life, the fact that later on he heats up a bunch of stones with the damn thing—and that Tyree's power hungry wife, Nona, catches him doing it—is fine proof that rules exist for a reason.

With Kirk sick, McCoy has to rely on the friendliness of the natives. Fortunately, he gets picked up by some of Tyree's men; there are two different societies fighting it out (hill people, with white hair and bows and arrows, and the village people, with dark hair and guns), and McCoy ends up with the "good guys." Tyree's fallen in love in the years since he last saw Kirk, or at least lust—his wife Nona is a witch woman who uses herbs to bind Tyree to her. The skin tight pants and puffy orange bra probably don't hurt either. (I guess there are wild Muppets in the area, 'cause at least a few of them died to make that top.) Plus, she's got make-up and a fake-looking tan. No red fingernails or ankle bracelet, but maybe she's still finding her way.

Nona heals Kirk of the *mugato*'s poison, with some hoo-doo that supposedly binds him to her. "War" has some dark questions, but it doesn't stint on the overheated melodrama—a spoonful of sugar and all that jazz—and Nona's "treatment" is hilarious. As is Nona in general. Although the campiness is definitely entertaining, she's probably the episode's weakest element; she's basically Evil Power Hungry Temptress 1a, and we never get any reason for her to be so desperate beyond that whole "powerful women are evil!" thing.

Really, though, the episode is about Kirk and McCoy trying to decide how to handle the situation. Once Kirk is back on his feet, he and McCoy check out a nearby village to have their suspicions confirmed; the Klingons have been supplying the townsfolk with guns. (It's interesting that they've been doing this in such a surreptitious fashion; the natives probably would've developed guns on their own eventually, and the Klingons go to great pains to ensure that the flintlock rifles they provide at least *look* like they could be home grown. Is the "non-interference directive" a universal treaty?) Now that the natives are all trigger happy, there's no way to put things back the way they were, so Kirk is faced with a dilemma. Does he let the townsfolk take over because of their advantage in arms, or does he make some guns of his own?

It's not that difficult a choice for Kirk. He makes up his mind without us or McCoy being in on the process; it's guns, guns, guns all around. When he states his case to McCoy, it's hard to argue with him; he's using the "balance of power" justification that led to nuclear proliferation for the second half of last century, and while it's a dangerous road, it's not an easy one to step off of. The Klingons have given Kirk enough wiggle room to lend aid to his friends, and he's going to take advantage of that as much as he can. What's great is that this is never presented as an unequivocal good. The Klingon that Kirk and McCoy fight with never gets shot, there's never any feeling of heroism when hill people start to fight back. It seems more like an impossible situation that gets an unpleasant solution, and whether or not you agree with it, I think the episode presents its point fairly.

The one hold-out of the hill people to Kirk's plan is Tyree, who refuses to kill. That gets complicated when he catches Kirk making time with Nona. After Nona saw McCoy using the phaser, she decided she wants herself a piece of that; so with her "magic," she seduces Kirk to try and bend him to her will. Tyree sees them making out, and nearly shoots Kirk, but he changes his mind and drops his gun, leaving just before a *mugato* (probably the mate of one McCoy killed earlier) jumps out. Kirk's in too weakened a state to defend himself and Nona, well, she's a girl, so what're you gonna do. Kirk eventually busts out his own phaser and kills the beast; in lieu of thanks, Nona knocks Kirk unconscious, steals his gun, and makes her way to meet the village folks, determined to find *someone* who'll be willing to put her new toy to good use.

There follows some unpleasantness, as the town people don't really appreciate Nona's offer, and she can't seem to figure out the phaser well enough to hold them back. Tyree and the others catch up in time to see Nona get killed, and Tyree wigs out. There's fighting, the villagers are either killed or run off, and Tyree has made up his mind; he wants guns and he wants vengeance, in that order. Kirk's finally got his wish, but nobody seems too pleased about it. Ordering up the flintlocks from the Enterprise, Kirk asks for "100 serpents... for the Garden of Eden." The line is a little too on the nose, but it's hard to disagree with the sentiment.

"War"'s all about what happens when advanced civilizations decide to muck around with cavemen; and "Return To Tomorrow" is actually about the same thing, only this time, it's the *Enterprise* that's living on rocks and shadows, and an alien race that far outpaces them. In a way, we're dealing with another race of god-beings, but for once, they aren't here torment Kirk and the rest. This time they actually need help, and it's not because they're bored. They're stuck in these orbs, see, and they're all energy, no life. The wisdom of the ages, but if they want to get anything done, they'll need to get a little physical, and to do *that* they need bodies. And y'know, Kirk has one of those. So does Spock.

So does this week's crew-woman guest star, Ann Mulhall, played by Diana Muldaur. Muldaur is best known to Trekkies as Dr. Pulaski, from the second season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*; her character there was controversial, to say the least (speaking for myself, she was more annoying than Tasha Yar), but she does a fine job here. She isn't given a whole lot to work with, to be sure, but at least she doesn't spend her time bitching Spock out for being emotionless or something.

The *Enterprise* is moving through unexplored space when they get a hail from a dead planet; the hail becomes a sonorous voice that must be pretty lonely, because he's asking for some company. And he's incredibly powerful, so it might not be a good idea to refuse his request. Communication with Starfleet is on a three week delay, so Kirk is on his own. He tries to play it safe, telling Spock to stay behind on the ship while he and the others beam down, but the power goes out, and Kirk gets the message; Spock is invited. Mulhall receives a similar summons to the transporter room. (Odd that the voice, who calls himself Sargon, resorted to indirect communication when he clearly doesn't have any problem explaining himself in words.)

Inside the planet, our heroes find a orb that blinks light. Sargon's consciousness exists inside that orb, and when he asks Kirk to come closer, that consciousness jumps into Kirk's body. And oh lord, how the Shatning does commence. In general, "Tomorrow" is a solid morality play with sci-fi (SyFy?) trappings; but for that brief moment when Kirk is first possessed, it's something else entirely. I mean, he actually feels himself up. The idea that anybody on set could see that number and not bust a gut laughing is beyond me.

Sargon's invasion naturally puts everybody on the edge, but it seems like his intentions are pure. He's just borrowing Kirk, not buying, and the only real damage he does is ramping up Kirk's metabolism to dangerous levels. Once McCoy's calmed down, Sargon lays out the deal: his race died out thousands of years ago, after being so incredibly powerful that they could do just about anything. (He keeps calling everybody "my child," and there's some speculation that his people might've got the Vulcan race going.) But there were some problems, you know how it goes, and the planet's atmosphere got a little, what's the word for it, destroyed. Now the only three beings left of Sargon's people are Sargon himself, his wife Thalassa, and a dude named Henoeh. They've been waiting in these giant ping-pong balls for ages, just for some conscious life to come close enough to contact, and now that Sargon has made new friends, he needs to ask a favor. If he and his two companions can borrow Kirk, Spock, and Mulhall's bodies, they can build humanoid robots to house their energy in.

Much like "War," there's as much time spent talking about what needs to be done as there is actually doing it, and I count that as a point in both episodes' favor. In "War," there was a terrific discussion on the bridge about the relative speeds of a society's development, plus the arguments between Kirk and McCoy on the planet; here, we get Kirk pushing to let Sargon have his way, while McCoy and Scotty express their serious reservations. In all cases, nobody seems over-matched or foolish. Kirk wins out, but he has to work for it, and I love his final argument—that it's important to take a risk and trust Sargon, because of the incredible opportunities an advanced race like Sargon's can provide. Sure, there's something odd about Sargon wanting the *Enterprise's* captain and its first officer; this isn't intentional plotting on Sargon's part (he, at least, is worth of Kirk's trust), but the simple mechanics of putting a ship's two highest ranking personnel out of commission for an unknown length of time seem prohibitive. But while I don't think Kirk's enthusiasm is exactly practical, I appreciate that he needs to get his way for the good of the episode, and I enjoy how he justifies himself.

What follows is an entertaining mini-tragedy; of the three invading presences, Henoeh (who takes over Spock's body) proves himself most untrustworthy, driven half-mad after all his time imprisoned, and really not that keen on leaving such a nifty Vulcan body behind for the confines of circuits and steel. Nimoy gets a chance to ham it up here, and it

really pays off. He has a half-smirk on his face most of the time, and he makes a great contrast to the somewhat overplayed nobility of Sargon and Thalassa and their love. Just as interesting is that Henoah's temptations actually start to work on Thalassa; I guess her being a woman and all, she's really keen on sensuality, and wants to get more passionate hugging in her with husband before they go all cybernetic.

Things come to a head when Henoah decides he has to kill Sargon to get his way. (Actually, the decision comes pre-made; five minutes after jumping into Spock, he's already messing with the meds that will keep Sargon from overheating Kirk's body.) There's an unconvincing attempt to generate suspense by telling us that Kirk is dead, and then by having Spock poisoned to force Henoah out; the spheres are destroyed; but everything turns out okay, with Henoah destroyed, Kirk and Spock restored, and Thalassa and Sargon happily consigned to mutual oblivion. (She keeps asking "Can we go there together?" I'm not sure she understands what oblivion actually means.)

Nobody gets any shiny new tech, but that's probably for the best. Given what we saw in "War," it's a wonder that Kirk is so eager to jump start his race's knowledge. Oh, Starfleet is wonderfully peaceful and perfect, no question; but I'm willing to bet that Sargon's people thought themselves pretty perfect too, and look where they ended up. It doesn't matter that most everybody has the best of intentions. In the end, all it comes down to is that one guy in the back suddenly thinking, "Y'know, it wouldn't be *that* hard to get away with," and everything gets complicated. For now, at least, it's better that those complications won't destroy any planets.

#### Grades:

"A Private Little War": B+

"Return To Tomorrow": B+

#### Stray Observations:

- The sub-plot in "War" about Spock's health problems is so-so (Spock's self-induced coma was interesting, Chapel's infatuation less so), but it's nice to get another African-American profession into the show; this time it's Dr. M'Benga (Booker Bradshaw), an expert on Vulcan biology who we'll never see again. Ah well, at least he gets to slap Nimoy around before he goes.
- There's a great bit in "War" when one of the armed natives says, "I thought my people would get tired of killing," but then admits that they've actually developed a taste for it. Balance of power or not, that's messed up.
- The visual style of "Tomorrow" is really striking. Ralph Senensky has directed episodes we've already covered, but this is the first I remember noticing the difference.
- Next week, Nazis in "Patterns of Force," and presumably non-Nazis in "By Any Other Name."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (82)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 11:02am

Plot

I invite you all to enjoy the attached article from Slate (totally SFW) about hollywood's plot factories and attempts to reduce all media to a type of Mad Libs of writing.

It really got me thinking about ST and how there really are only a few basic plots, three of which are implicated in these episodes:

1) Prime Directive prevents the gang from doing the right thing, but then is ignored in favor of the doing the right thing.

2) Bodies are hijacked.

3) Aliens force the gang to do something, gang resists and plot culminates with gang convincing aliens that they'd do it willingly but not by force.

Really if you went through 3 seasons of TOS, 7 of TNG, DS9 and Voyager and 4 of Enterprise, I wonder how far down you could reduce Star Trek plot choices.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:05am

It's been said here before, and I'll say it again: the Prime Directive is a joke. For all the hoopla it gets, people sure do love to totally ignore it. Kirk may as well have given Tyree AK47s and jetskis to boot.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:18am

What's a joke is how so many Trekkies take the Prime Directive seriously, like it's some amazing philosophy that Roddenberry created. It's a merely a writer's construct, used to provide the plot with a conflict.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:40am

Agreed. Why is warp-drive capable technology the point at which any civilization can start to influence/trade with/muck up another? Shouldn't it be an all-or-nothing philosophy, if you propose it at all?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:47am

It seems the whole "first contact after warp drive" comes basically from how it happened to us- we invent it, the Vulcans drop by, and everything becomes peachy-keen. Which seems even more retarded- who is to say that culture that just broke the speed of light will WANT to join up with us? What happens when a planet that breaks the warp barrier in the middle of our turf wants to join the Romulans, or Klingons?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 12:10pm

Sorry! I forgot the link:

<http://www.slate.com/id/222...>

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 1:07pm

Prime Directive? Prime Suggestion, more like!

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 1:36pm

The Prime Directive got a wee bit more confusing in TNG, where it seemed sometimes that even fully up-to-speed societies were supposed to be not interfered with. This usually meant our heroes had to angst over some awful custom of said society before either 1) Deum ex machina or 2) letting it happen so as to be grim and gritty.

Then there was the time that Picard refused to act to save a society that was about to get wiped out by a solar flare or something. The speech they gave Picard for why to allow the civilization to just go kaput was totally asinine and I can't believe it made it on the air. Completely ridiculous (yeah, I know, its a SciFi TV show). BUT but Worf's half-brother sneaks a tribe of them into the holodeck, so they end up saving some of them anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 2:28pm

JBMD - don't forget

5: Defeat the borg by modulating the phasers (but remember, we'll only get 2 or 3 shots before they adapt. although we'll just remodulate again before the next battle, why we can't build a phaser that just keeps on remodulating we don't know)

6: Solve the mystery by reversing the polarity and or emitting tachyons

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:31pm

Hercules, it's called an iMod, and that bitch is the best Borg blaster in Elite Force. Too smart for the show, though.

As for technobabble solutions...in the old days my TOS never (almost) opted for such nonsense. No tachyon pulse, deflector emission, or remodulated positron beam to get you out of a mess.

Quick TOS Solutions:

1. Dystopia? Temporary amnesia of the Prime Directive should assist you in unfucking that civilization. We would rather not interfere in helping you become exactly like us, but...
2. Annoying Omnipotent Entity? Phase their power source or wait for Omnipotoddler's parents to show up.
3. Mechanical Antagonists? Unleash the computer-killing logic of Kirk.
4. Gorn? Build a fucking bamboo cannon.

[Reply](#)

- [Nilus](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:36pm

PM, You forgot something in Enterprise it goes

Capt. Archer watches water polo. Capt. Archer gets kidnapped, furrows his brow, and escapes. Blah blah blah time war

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:38pm

I heard a story about TNG scripts that they all were written with big holes in them marked "TECH" to be filled in later. Ever since then, it has seemed patently obvious how the original scripts read:

Worf: "Captain! The Borg are attacking again!"

Picard: "Raise shields!"

Data: "Shields are offline, Captain."

Picard: "Suggestions?"

Worf: "I recommend we [TECH]"

Data: "[TECH] would be ineffective at this range. Perhaps if we [TECH] the [TECH] and then [TECHED] our [TECH] we could [TECH]."

Picard: "Agreed. Engage the [TECH]."

Wesley: "[TECH] is working, Captain!"

etc.



In later episodes, it appears TECH was replaced wholesale in the final product with versions of the word Tachyon, Tachyon Pulse, etc.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:39pm

#4 makes me wonder... how would that bamboo cannon fair against the Borg? Their shields seem to only react to energy weapons (it doesn't Worf's klingon sword from cutting off one of their arms in First Contact) Maybe the federation has been out-thinking themselves this whole time and they just need to visit Vasquez Rocks for a supply run.

[Reply](#)

- [Eric JA](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 4:09pm

Next season on Mythbusters, they're testing whether Kirk's fucking bamboo cannon would really work. No word on whether they're testing whether it would work on the Borg.

Info from Grant Imahara's twitter feed: @grantimahara

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 4:15pm

That always bugged me about the Borg—your Super Fantastic Bubble Plastic Phasers don't do shit after one or two shots, but you could still slice off their limbs or mow them down with a tommy gun or yank out their neck hoses, or clobber them with a golf club and they would fold like a cheap suit. Why the hell didn't they adapt to that?

[Reply](#)

- [Will You Marry Me](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 4:34pm

Actually, the basic Star Trek plot is, things are bad and you could solve them by pushing a button, but the damned button explodes. Then you have to use your wits and your humanity to either fix the damned button, or find a way to solve the bad problem without the button.

[Reply](#)

- [Counselor Troi](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 4:39pm

Captain, Drunk Dave is holding something in, but I sense that it will be coming out soon, probably sooner than he wants it to.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 4:50pm

Eric-

If I remember the bamboo cannon correctly, it involves putting highly explosive gunpowder in a bamboo stalk and lighting it on fire. I hope they don't have that hot girl do it, because she'd be less hot with only 7 fingers.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 7:13am

All this and not one mention of Time Travel Plot? Crew goes back in time by random but contradicts-any-other-episode method to either a) fix a problem they caused themselves or b) fix a problem someone else caused. Mission always completed successfully (probably - how could you tell if something changed?), although if it can be strung out to a two-parter in latter-day Trek, so much the better.



[Reply](#)

- [Son of Mogh](#)The Visible Man

10/15/16 10:20pm

As long as we don't include 'Picard' in our list of People. Picard was the sort of captain who would let his crew die rather than violate the Prime Directive. That commitment to duty, to something above himself, however you phrase it, it's one of the things that made him such a standout character.

[Reply](#)

- [Son of Mogh](#)JammerJim

10/15/16 10:24pm

See what I mean? Picard totally adheres to the Prime Directive? Kirk would have been like, "To hell with the Prime Directive. We have to save these people!" And Janeway just didn't care about anyone who wasn't on her crew, so she would give 'em the tail lights.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 10:48am

That was Dr Pulaski?! Wow she was a HOT-TAY!  
She was also in that episode where she played the blind ambassador too.  
I'm coining a new term: FLEET CRED

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

7/16/09 10:51am

She really fell off the attractiveness wagon from 1968 to 1986, eh?

See, I didn't mind Tasha because she was hot, but Pulaski looked like my grandfather.

[Reply](#)

- [Harbinger of the Arockalypse](#)The Pizza Monster

7/16/09 12:20pm

I thought Tasha Yar was awesome when I started watching TNG, but I was 9. Any girl that kicked ass (or even was said to kick ass) was awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster

7/16/09 2:22pm

Ha! you've fallen into the Mark Leonard trap. I will now demonstrate my Geekery by pointing out that it's Lenard, not Leonard!

[Reply](#)

- [Julie Delpys Lipstick](#)The Pizza Monster

7/16/09 3:22pm

The Mike Brady perm was Muldaur's undoing.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)The Pizza Monster

7/16/09 9:32pm

Any Mad Men fans here? Denise Crosby has fallen MIGHTY far off the aforementioned wagon.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)The Pizza Monster

7/17/09 2:08am

Hell yeah, Man Men fan. Don't remember her character "Gertie".

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster

7/17/09 6:55am

Chico, See Also: Dexter.

And of the bad things you could say about Pulaski, I think the perm is somewhere down around number 348 (although I still maintain it was nice to have a character who, however briefly, wasn't just nicey-nicey all the time in early TNG).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

7/17/09 2:43pm

Chico-

Oh yes, scary. Very scary.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster

7/17/09 3:38pm

Chico: Denise Crosby was in Mad Men?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

7/18/09 9:50am

Scarily so:

<http://www.flickr.com/photo...>

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster

7/18/09 11:48am

Wow, I can't believe I missed that!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 10:54am

M'Benga

Is this really the only M'Benga episode? The books (yes, they're all crap blah blah) are constantly referring to him, and I rather thought he showed up in more than one episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:43am

As written above, it isn't his only appearance. His daughter shows up in the DS9 post-series novels, which are not all crap.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 6:59am

The books aren't all crap, John Barleycorn, although that's not to say I'd be caught reading them on the tram (well, maybe if it was disguised by a copy of Big Schlongs Monthly to reduce the embarrassment factor). A few of them were even very good (First Frontier jumps immediately to mind), although a lot of them are really, really 50% (competently enough written, entirely mechanical and predictably). Also, almost every chapter in every novel, if memory serves, ends with, "And then all hell broke loose".

And if the TOS novels were uninspired, the TNG ones were almost uniformly awful.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 2:45pm

They're crap, but it doesn't stop me from reading them. I may have mentioned this before, but I think "Federation" is really quite good.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 3:42pm

I can't say whether all Star Trek novels are crap, but every time I read one, it's crap. Except of course for The Final Reflection. Let's hear it for pre-TNG Klingons!

Federation was my last attempt to give the genre a chance. It wasn't as crap as say, "Black Fire" (which nearly put me off Star Trek novels forever) or "The Lost Years", but it wasn't what i would call a good novel.

Prole Hole: "And Then All Hell Broke Loose" should be the title of the next Star Trek movie!

(or maybe "Star Trek: Big Schlongs Monthly!")

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/18/09 9:48am

I got off the bus at "Schlong"

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/18/09 10:27am

Was that the short bus?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 5:41pm

A Private Little War...

is one of my favorite downbeat endings from TOS. usually, they involve a woman so it's nice to see one that didn't.

something else interesting about this episode is that apparently it was originally going to be updated for TNG with an aging Kirk returning to the planet, but Shatner didn't want to do it so they rewrote it and it became Too Short a Season.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)tibber

7/17/09 1:37am

Well, the sexiest (and as far as we can see, only) woman on the planet almost gets raped and is then killed at the end, escalating the war.

But you're right. I think maybe it was Zack who brought it up a few weeks ago - what should reasonably be downbeat endings too often seem to devolve into a cheap joke on the bridge - nevermind the bodies left behind. As a kid, I always preferred the joke. These days, not so much.

[Reply](#)

- [tibbertibber](#)

7/17/09 5:00am

i meant like Kirk grieving over a woman. the best one was City on the Edge of Forever. the worst was the one where Spock erased Kirk's memory of the chick because he wanted to forget her. all the intergalactic pussy Kirk's pulled and NOW he gets all emo about it?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)tibber

7/18/09 1:11am

Another one of Kirk grieving over a woman, that was surprisingly poignant, is the last minute or two of Paradise Syndrome. Miramaneeeeeeee! A cheesey episode: but the way Kirk sits with her as Gerald Fried's score tells us the moment she dies, and then sits with her body as the credits roll, is actually moving.

[Reply](#)

- [meyertibber](#)

7/18/09 7:12pm

@Tibber - Sorry, I misunderstood your meaning. Which episode had Kirk's memory erased? I don't remember that one.

[Reply](#)

- [tibbertibber](#)

7/19/09 1:07am

i can't remember the name of the episode. the one where they need the anecdote from the guy that turns out to be immortal and involved in all sorts of Earth history, and Kirk gets a hardon for his daughter, who IIRC, is actually a robot. or something.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 10:36am

Woo hoo!

Woo hoo!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 10:49am

A heartfelt, unpretentious first. Kudos.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:19am

Agreed. Now, give me a handjob.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 1:03pm

With your mouth.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 2:34pm

Well when you figure it out, patent that bitch!

[Reply](#)

- [Now Im Prune Tracy](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 2:50pm

@Dr Samuel Johnson: How about a "boswell"?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:32pm

Out on the Interstate near where I live is a billboard touting the famous "Danish Windmill."

I don't know what that is, but it sounds awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Astaroth](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 3:35pm

That bitter taste in your mouth? It's my vomit.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [gottacook2](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 12:30pm

Diana Muldaur

Writing in 1970, Harlan Ellison (in the collection of TV columns The Other Glass Teat) says of Muldaur's role in the Dennis Weaver series McCloud that she "acts as memorably as she looks." She was indeed classy, and still is as far as I know.

I wonder if she and Roddenberry were friends. In the mid-1970s she was the major guest star (leader of a matriarchal society) in the second of his two closely related TV movies/series pilots, Planet Earth, starring John Saxon as Dylan Hunt (the first was Genesis II with Alex Cord in the same role). She should be seen in that role by anyone here who doubts her allure.

As for "Return to Tomorrow," it featured not only interesting direction but also a George Duning music score, his second one for the series (after "Metamorphosis"). Duning also scored Muldaur's other episode, "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" early in season 3; perhaps not a coincidence?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)gottacook2

7/16/09 12:41pm

I actually thought the score was a little overwrought in "Tomorrow."

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)gottacook2

7/17/09 2:15am

Whoa, Gottacook steals my music comment!

Well done.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)gottacook2

7/17/09 1:43pm

I loved the two Star Trek scores mentioned. Thanks for the info.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)gottacook2

7/18/09 1:06am

Interesting. I love the Star Trek music, in general. But I just DO NOT LIKE the ones Duning did. I positively hate the score for season 3's The Empath. Fingernails on a blackboard. The one for In Truth No Beauty is more interesting, I guess: but not really enjoyable. Haven't seen the other two episodes in a while, but I never loved them, so I imagine that's my opinion of the scores too.

Jef Bond writes that the music under Kirk's "Risk is our business" speech is "one of the most moving and characteristic moments of the series ... inspiring underscoring ... exultant music". I'll give the episode another watch.

Actually, Bond points out that this episode is heavily tracked. Duning wrote a partial score, which included a love them for Sargon & Thalassa, some "harsh, discordant cues" for Henocho's bad stuff, and Kirk's speech.

If you are a fan of Duning's ST scores, there's a CD available with a ~20-min long "symphonic suite" arrangement of the Is There In Truth No Beauty score:

<http://www.amazon.com/Star-...>

And selections from The Empath are available on CD as well:

<http://www.amazon.com/Star-...>

The music from Metamorphosis and Return To Tomorrow have not been released.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 10:51am

Dr. M'Benga

He is actually seen again in the episode "That Which Survives", Season Three.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

7/16/09 10:56am

Ah, well, there we go.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

7/16/09 11:24am

Well, it's about time they assigned someone to the ship who knows Vulcan physiology. No wonder Spock always resists being sent to (or kept in) sickbay - McCoy constantly seems to be winging it whenever Spock gets in trouble.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

7/16/09 11:47am

M'Benga's daughter shows up as a main character in the DS9 post-series novels, which for the most part are pretty decent.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster

7/16/09 11:48am

M'Benga's daughter shows up as a main character in the DS9 post-series novels, which for the most part are pretty decent.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 10:52am

"The Shatening"  
Classic.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 10:59am

I enjoyed that word muchly. Highly cromulent.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/16/09 11:43am

There's a healthy bit of level 5 Shatening when Kirk gets bitten by the Mugato.

[Reply](#)

- [Blufyor](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 11:11am

"Plato's Stepchildren" has one of the strangest Shatenings:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/17/09 1:40pm

Yeah, in this one, he kinda walks around groin first.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen

7/17/09 1:45am

Location. Location. Location.

A big thing in favor of "A Private Little War" is the rare (certainly at this point in the series) outdoors location shooting. Filming outside of the back lot really sells the few episodes where they had the money/time to do it. Imagine if they had used sets for "Shore Leave" or "Arena". I think "The Galileo 7" would have been awesome if they had gone back to Vasquez Rocks to film it.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)meyer

7/17/09 7:20am

Have you never been to California?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)meyer

7/17/09 12:29pm

These aren't filmed at Vasquez Rocks. They're filmed out at the Paramount Ranch north of Malibu where they also filmed all their cowboy shows.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer

7/18/09 7:15pm

I thought "Arena" was Vasquez Rocks. I guess that answers the question of where to find a desolate hellhole landscape - North of Malibu!

[Reply](#)

- [Well Done Denny Hall](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 12:18pm

Zack, loving the writeups, but...

... in the fifth paragraph, "...there's two different society's fighting it out ..." is like a punch directly between the eyes. Other than that, top effort, please carry on with more of the same. Cheers.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Well Done Denny Hall

7/16/09 12:59pm

Zack's typographical errors are part of his charm. Let the man be! At least he didn't write "their's two different society's. . ."

[Reply](#)

- [strange\\_attractor](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 12:54pm

Kudos to Zach

"But there were some problems, you know how it goes, and the planet's atmosphere got a little, what's the word for it, destroyed"

NICE!!!

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)strange\_attractor

7/16/09 2:12pm

"The people of planet Spaceball, having foolishly squandered their own atmosphere..."

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Zack Handlen

7/16/09 11:16am

Dr. M'Benga

I'd like to see him in the Abrams movie sequel, played by Tony Todd.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Soylent Green

7/16/09 12:11pm

I, for one, wouldn't want Candyman operating on me.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Zack Handlen

7/17/09 9:34am

Have no fear...

Sargon is here!

\*giggles hysterically\*

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart

7/17/09 3:53pm

\*sings\* We're the MesopotaMEEans....



[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/08/16 10:09pm

I didn't see any quotes, but I liked the Shatning.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Patterns Of Force" / "By Any Other Name"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published July 23, 2009

[Comments \(113\)](#)



It may be a stretch, but I'm starting to discern something of a theme emerging in the second season of *Star Trek*. We've got our Federation now, and we've got the *Enterprise* dealing with less-advanced civilizations; and over and over again, we've seen both how difficult it is for our heroes to adhere to Starfleet's "non-interference directive," and how important it is that that directive remains in effect. Kirk's managed to do some good by punching his way through somebody else's problems, but in the past few weeks, we've been learning how it's nearly always better to leave well-enough alone.

"Patterns Of Force" continues the trend, to a degree that may render all future lessons superfluous. Here we have another society modeling itself after old Earth cultures, but instead of a bunch of goofy, slang spouting hoodlums, we've got Nazis. I can't really imagine topping that, can you? A world of devil-worshippers would have more class. When I told a friend I was watching "Patterns," he said he kind of wished Kirk had just leaned on the *Enterprise's* phaser button and wiped the whole lot of these evil mofos out. Having finished the episode, I'm inclined to agree.

The tone here is darker than it was in "Piece Of The Action," and that darkness doesn't sit well with *Trek's* essential optimism. There's something wrong about Kirk, Spock, and McCoy in Nazi uniforms, like we're supposed to take goofy pleasure in the juxtaposition of space travelling heroes and militaristic sociopaths. The Nazis here aren't just general purpose bad-guys like they are in the Indiana Jones movies; in "Force," we're reminded over and over of the hateful principles that defined the movement. We don't see any concentration camps, but we do see the German stand-ins hating on the Jewish stand-ins ("Zeons" with names like "Isak" and "Abrom"), and we even hear about a woman getting shot in the street and left to die while soldiers spat on her bleeding corpse. I can appreciate the honesty in not trying to white-wash what Nazis are capable of, but this is a bit much.

The *Enterprise* is trying to find John Gill, a historian who was suppose to be a cultural observer on the planet Eko. The Federation has yet to make direct contact with the natives; Gill's job was to study the Ekosians without letting anyone know who he was or where he was from. (We've seen Kirk and Spock integrate themselves into local cultures before, but never for extended periods of time. Gill's been on Eko for years, which makes you wonder how good he must be at blending in. Hopefully not the lost in his own museum type.) But nobody's heard from Gill in a while, so of course we

send the *Enterprise* to go check on him.

Ekosians are supposed to be pre-space travel in their development, but when the *Enterprise* approaches the planet, a vessel is sent to greet them, un-manned, and carrying a nuclear bomb. Spock determines that the ship must've originated somehow from the nearby Zeon, a planet whose people have gotten into their launching things into the sky without having them explode phase. Of course, the bomb-vessel approaching the *Enterprise* is *designed* to explode, and it does just that, with Kirk and the others barely able to steer clear in time.

It's been a while since we've had a good "ship in danger" episode—and, okay, "Force" really isn't one of those, as the *Enterprise* quickly leaves the area after depositing Kirk and Spock on Eko. But still, it's good to see everyone on the bridge just a little worried about the oncoming nuclear bomb; just as it's good to get that moment of horror when Kirk and Spock beam down to the planet (both wearing clothes that look a lot like the clothes they wore in "City On The Edge Of Forever") and see a group of Nazi officers beating up on a guy. Whatever else happens, I'll give "Force" points for those two moments of shock, and for the extra edge that runs through the episode as a whole. It goes too far by the end, mainly because the quick-fix ending doesn't jive with everything else we've seen, but it's a pleasure to realize that the show still has the power to get under your skin.

Nazis, then. Kirk and Spock make an effort to infiltrate their ranks (Spock to Kirk: "You'd make a very convincing Nazi."), but fail miserably. Ostensibly it's because a commanding officer gets suspicious and has Spock reveal his pointy ears, but if I can critique the great James T.'s performance, he's really crap when it comes to undercover work. He never shuts up; it's like trying to make a spy out of Roger Rabbit. "Hi! Hi, guys? Guys? I'm a Nazi! I'm totally a Nazi! Isn't it great that we're Nazis? Guys? Go Nazis! Woool! Hate *rules*." Since everyone else appears to buy the act, I can only assume they all think he's some higher-up's brother-in-law, the one who keeps getting promoted in spite of having his head run over that one time.

There's whipping, then, which would be graphic if the lash marks on Shatner and Nimoy didn't look like they were drawn in Crayon. (Spock's blood is green, in a nice continuity nod.) Surprisingly, the Nazis are a little into torture, and things might've got out of hand if a high-ranking officer named Eneg didn't step in a make up some excuse about giving it a rest. (Eneg is working for the Resistance, by the way.) Spock uses some mad science to laser open his and Kirk's jail cell, and they escape along with Isak, the Zeon they saw getting beat down in the street earlier. A quick stop to the laboratory for their equipment (Kirk tells a passing guard that he's taking Spock and Isak for "experimental work," which is freaky when you remember the "experiments" the real Nazis got up to), and then Isak leads Kirk and Spock to meet the underground movement.

Some more backstory, then: the Zeons had come to Eko to try and help the Ekosians out, but then the Nazi party sprung up and things got uncomfortable for anyone not native born. Eko stole Zeon's technology, and is now getting ready to implement it's Final Solution, which will involve launching attacks on the Zeon homeworld. John Gill is apparently the Fuhrer of the new regime, which surprises the hell out of Kirk, and increases his determination to meet with Gill face to face. He'll need help, though, and luckily help arrives in the form of a cute blonde Ekosian named Daras working with the Resistance. After a quick trick proves that Kirk and Spock are with the good guys, everyone agrees to bust up a government party that night, when Gill is supposed to give his latest speech.

Things go about as you'd expect, with lots of running around and Kirk and Spock pretending to be a documentary film crew. McCoy eventually winds up on the planet, because Kirk and Spock have both seen Gill and they believe he's been drugged. (He actually delivers his broadcast from behind closed doors to a television camera, and, as Spock points out, his speech doesn't make any sense; it's just a random assortment of chest-pounding phrases.) Gill is eventually brought back to consciousness, and we find out that he brought Nazism to Eko because the society was divided, weak, and he thought that by taking out the anti-Semitic element, Nazis would be a perfectly peaceful way to bring everyone together.

This was not a good call. Kirk argues at the end of the episode that the big problem with the movement is the cult of leadership at its center, which makes it too easy for unscrupulous men to take control. That's reasonable, but it doesn't explain why the Ekosians took so much to hating the Zeons—and that's the real trouble, I'd say. At the end of "Force,"

Gill is dead, having revealed that his treacherous second in command was responsible for all the bad stuff that's been going on. We're supposed to believe that things will be okay from then on, but I'm not seeing it. You can't resolve Nazis in 50 minutes, and "Force"'s biggest flaw is that it grafts a standard *Trek* structure onto a subject that's too unwieldy, too rusted and jagged, to fit.

But hey, remember what I said about ship-in-danger episodes? Turns out we didn't have to wait that long after all. "By Any Other Name" puts the *Enterprise* at risk, in the face of a new threat that's looking for real-estate. Lots of real-estate, it turns out. A whole galaxy's worth.

Using a distress call to pull Kirk and the rest to their locations, a group of aliens in humanoid form manage to take control of the *Enterprise* and everyone on it in a handful of minutes. They've got magic belt buckles (sure, there's a proper name, but let's be honest, that's what they are) that they can use to paralyze anyone who gets in their way, along with a whole host of other nasty things. (I assume it's a whole host, anyway. We only ever seem them do three things.) They all hail from a place called Kelvan, in the Andromeda Galaxy. Andromeda is going to be uninhabitable due to radiation levels, and they've decided to take over our digs and move in.

Their leader is a Richard Burton lookalike named Rojan. Rojan's kind of a dick. He spends a lot of time lecturing Kirk on Kirk's obligations as a conquered person, and when Kirk has the temerity to try and escape captivity (he, Spock, McCoy, and a couple of red-shirts are being held on a planet while the Kelvans modify the *Enterprise*'s engines to fit their speed requirements), Rojan decides to take it out on the two red-shirts. First he has one of his men, Hanar, zap the pair with his buckle, turning them into polyhedron-ish sponges. Rojan explains to Kirk that the sponges represent the crew-members' "essence," and then he crushes one of them.

Surprisingly, the crushed, and therefore dead, crew-member turns out to be the female red-shirt. Before she was taken aside, the crew-member told Kirk she didn't want to die—and while this is manipulative as hell, it doesn't seem cheap, and it's one of the few times on the series I remember actually being taken back by a minor character's death. This also makes Rojan look like more of a bad-ass. If there's anything "Force" and "Name" have in common, it's that they both have villains that come off as actual threats. But while the Nazis are threatening more for their historical significance than for anything we really see in the episode, Rojan is smart, determined, and merciless.

Kirk comes up with a plan to get him and the others back to the ship—Spock fakes sickness by essentially putting himself into a brief coma—but nearly every other plan he comes up with doesn't go so well. Scotty and Spock can't interfere with the field generator that powers the Kelvans' buckles because the generator is protected by an indestructible metal; and when Scotty and Spock set up a way to blow up the entire ship, Kirk can't go through with it. It's hard to blame him. While it would be a small cost to lose four hundred people when weighed against the entire galaxy, (although given how often Kirk and the rest save that galaxy, I wonder how long it would survive without the *Enterprise*) self-destructing would mean giving up, and that's just not in Kirk's wiring.

Plus, it's going to be a long time before they arrive at Andromeda—a bit less than 300 years. The Kelvans have planned for this; it took them generations to get here, and it's going to take generations to get back. They don't seem to have a problem with this, because, as Spock notes after a brief, unsuccessful attempt to mind probe a Kelvan mind, the Kelvans have sacrificed everything that would get in the way of their superior intellect. Emotions and everything else that could distract is gone. Sounds like the Vulcans' end game, but the Vulcans aren't multi-tentacled, which, in their natural form, the Kelvans apparently are. The only reason we're not babbling like one of Lovecraft's scholars at the sight of them is that they've taken on human form to conquer the hell out of us.

If you've seen much *Trek* before, you should be able to figure out what comes next. And really, it's telegraphed early on, when Kelinda, the hottie blonde Kelvan, talks with Kirk about how impressed she is with flowers. It's the old, "seduce the aliens with the wonderfulness of human sensuality!" gambit, and it knocks the episode down a few points for me because, while it's done well here, it's just not that interesting an idea at this point. Especially not when it involves Kirk yet again seducing another hot blonde. I mean, that's not really exciting anymore, is it? It's not impressive. It's like eating a candy bar and it cures cancer, and then expecting everyone to think you're awesome. (Although I guess if you ate a candy bar and it cured cancer, it would be very hard to deny your awesomeness.)

But hey, like I said, predictable or not, it's well done. While Kirk puts the movies on Kelinda (who, it must be said, is amusingly fascinated by the whole process; Shatner's surprised expression when she calls him on his technique is hilarious), Spock works to sow jealousy in Rojan, and McCoy starts injecting Hanar with something to make him really pissed off. The best of these bits is Scotty's attempt to drink one of the bigger Kelvans under the table. While Scotty collapses before he's able to bring Kirk the magic belt buckle, the succession of drinks he pawns off on the guy ("What is it?" "It's, it's um, it's green.") is terrific.

There are other things to enjoy here as well. The energy barrier between the *Enterprise's* galaxy and Andromeda is cool (also vaguely reminiscent of the barrier in *Star Trek V*, which is significantly less cool), and, as mentioned, the Kelvans are one of the better threats we've had. I like the dynamic that develops in the second half of the episode. Once the ship makes it through the barrier, the Kelvans decide that most of the crew is no longer necessary, and reduces everyone but Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and Scotty to the essence sponges. There's a great shot of Kirk turning a corner and finding a hallway littered with them. Stark, kind of silly, but kind of freaky, too. They're stuck in this big, nearly empty ship, with just some strangers and a bunch of blocks for company.

I also like how the episode ends. After Kirk and Rojan have a fight over Kelinda—who, in traditional human girl fashion, stands off to one side looking concerned and then gets turned on by the violence—Kirk suggests that maybe this whole 300 year trip is a bad idea. The current Kelvans are running on orders given out centuries before they were born. Why should they obey? Who knows what's happened back home; why spend the rest of their lives on the ship just to save strangers who might already be dead? Plus, being human is totally kick-ass, and Kirk promises the Federation will help them find a place to call home. It's a win-win that doesn't end in a bunch of dead aliens, and I didn't actually see that coming.

Lesson learned this week: never teach people how to be Nazis, but do teach them how to get drunk, get mad, and make-out.

#### **Grades:**

**"Patterns Of Force": B**

**"By Any Other Name": B+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- That whole whipping scene in "Force" was a like a network-friendly version of Nazi-sploitation. (I was surprised that Daras's name wasn't Ilsa, but then, since she's really a good guy, that's probably for the best.)
- Nimoy spends a good portion of "Force" with his shirt off. Enjoy!
- I'll be on vacation next week. But be back for the first week of August for "The Omega Glory" and "The Ultimate Computer"

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (113)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [AjaxZack Handlen](#)  
7/23/09 12:02pm

Two quick ones

I kind of go the other way from Zach w.r.t. "Patterns" — other than the scary Nazi uniforms and an alley brawl, I don't think the episode really shows you enough menace to lay out the full Nazi trip. Like Zach observed about slavery in "Gamesters of Trisekelion", fascism needs a society to make it what it is, and in my opinion we just don't see enough of Ekos's homegrown Reich (and telling ain't showing!) to give it full marks.

Structurally "Patterns" is almost the same episode as "Bread and Circuses," and as a result our faux-Nazis here aren't really any scarier than the faux-Romans from that ep. The costumes are doing most of the work, and I think it shows.

In re: "Name", drunk Scotty, or drinking Scotty, is always worth the price of admission. This is the best such performance, but the bar brawl in "Tribbles" and even the somewhat creepy leering at the dancer that opens "Wolf in the Fold" make me smile every time. What absolutely makes the bit in "Name" for me is that part one of his plan succeeds, but he passes out at the door to his quarters in his very moment of triumph.

Who hasn't been there, am I right fellas?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Ajax  
7/23/09 12:12pm

I'm glad that 100s of years from now, sailors will still be trying to get hammered and laid while on shore leave. Something comforting in the idea that even in this era of lofty ideals people are still human. Synthehol my foot!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Ajax  
7/23/09 12:38pm

I guess this thread is talking about two things, but back to the Nazi issue:

1) We probably shouldn't be too hard on Trek for not being sufficiently explanatory as to how these planets evolved, what their society is like, etc. In a 45 minute show, there's only so much time to do a detailed discussion of the planet of the week and unless we want more briefing room meetings, its hard to fit that in...

2) That said, Patterns strikes as wrong mostly because Gill's premise seems so fundamentally wrong. As a historian, Gill would fully understand and appreciate the rise of the Third Reich, and just believing it was because of a charismatic leader and spiffy uniforms misses the history of Germany that got it to that point. Bismark, Weimar, WWI, was all crucial to the development of Nazi Germany to say nothing of the importance of the German General (army) Staff and its loyalty to the country and its leadership (say what you want about Tom Cruise, Valkrie was just about dead on, if you don't believe me, read your Shire).

Point being, the idea of using the Nazi model to prop up a "weak" planet falls flat. It might have been better if the analogy was a bit less direct and Gill sets up a totalitarian regime focused on creating an "insider/outsider" mentality. Of the whole episode, probably the Jewish repression bit was the most engaging/well done.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Ajax  
7/23/09 1:37pm

As to point 2, maybe he was just an idiot? I don't know if this was any kind of intentional, but I like the irony of how Kirk and Spock keep speaking of Gill as a good man and a good teacher, while his actions reveal him to be a hubristic, dangerous fool. It sends a more subtle message about how charisma can be at odds with what a person actually is than the explicit argument about the dangers of a charismatic leader within a totalitarian society.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax  
7/23/09 2:08pm

1) I think the point was that Pattern should have illustrated the nastiness of the Nazis more than it did, not that they should have had a briefing room presentation on the history of Ekos and Zeon. Maybe Kirk and Spock should have beamed into a concentration camp?

2) Very good point. In agreement with Zack, I would find a more generic fascism much more believable, both from a dramatic point of view and from the point of view of Gill. Of course, that would not have allowed them to re-use costumes from WWII epics.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Ajax

7/23/09 2:09pm

In my opinion, "Patterns" is just flat-out a bad episode. C- at best. Trek tries to become "Hogan's Heroes". It's not just that it takes on too heavy a burden in using Nazi Germany as a backdrop, but that it also tries (and fails miserably) to be comic. I mean, the writing is really poor in this one. As spicoli mentions above, Gill is an idiot (his line "even historians sometimes fail to learn from history" a prime example) and his "excuse" makes absolutely no sense. The dialogue is clunky, Spock is turned into a comic relief stooge, and it helps that all the Ekosians are complete morons. Not to mention that - in case we didn't get that it was a Nazi planet - they slapped swastikas on everything, including the movie camera.

Bad episode. (Although I did enjoy Kirk's camera-direction line, "We'll shoot more coverage later"... didn't know they taught filmmaking at the academy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Ajax

7/23/09 3:44pm

Meyer-

(In Klink voice): "Spooock!"

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Ajax

7/23/09 4:03pm

However debatable the wisdom of using Nazis, the episode has to be at least counted as a success in terms of plotting. The pace keeps up pretty well throughout and the way it plays out doesn't seem rote: although Kirk keeps his eye on the goal of getting to Gill, his tactics, as Zack noted, almost never play out smoothly, so they keep stumbling into one situation after another. It feels a bit looser and more organic than certain other episodes—at least until the very end, where I agree the wrapup is too pat.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax

7/23/09 4:06pm

Cloud William: I suspect that a Nazi-esque set of imagery (a la The Wall) would be recognizable enough. They didn't need to literally outfit everyone in WWI costume. However, Truwiado makes an important point: they didn't choose Nazi outfits for dramatic purposes, they had access to Nazi costumes and built the story around them.

[Reply](#)

- [Garfield](#)Ajax

7/23/09 4:16pm

I have to believe that somehow there's a Hogan's Heroes connection here.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax

7/23/09 8:50pm

Jerry Fielding, who wrote the original music for The Trouble With Troubles, and Fred Steiner, who wrote more music for TOS than anybody else, are each credited with original music for over 20 episodes of Hogan's Heroes, 1965-6.

Also, Celeste Yarnall & Barbara Babcock were each in a couple episodes of HH.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Ajax

7/23/09 8:52pm

@Mr. Barleycorn -

Spock: "Sir, I am merely informing you that your line of questioning does not sufficiently pinpoint the information at my disposal."

Klink: "So! You know nothing?"

Spock: "I believe I just said that."

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)Ajax

7/24/09 1:21am

Is there anything to the idea that perhaps this Gill was looking at the Third Reich as a historian; that the horrors of one age become the dry dates and statistics of the next?

Or have I just been up for 30 hours and taken leave of my senses? (Also, I never watched TOS. And the only ep of TNG I saw was that one where the ship almost blows up.)

[Reply](#)

- [Vulcan With a Mullet](#)Ajax

7/24/09 2:14am

I think it's pretty clear in the episode that none of the Enterprise crew really admires the efficiency, et al, of the Nazi society... but I agree that they are pretty nonchalant about it.

Maybe that's just the "Prime Directive" coming into play (why don't they call it the "Passive-Aggressive Directive?") but it would be nice if they seemed a bit more repulsed by the Nazis. But like someone said above, that's probably the accurate historical distancing that people from the 23rd century would give Nazi Germany. Kinda like Ottoman Turkey for us today.. just doesn't have that new-car evil.

As for Gill, he's obviously a dick. "Even historians don't learn from history... arrggghhh...." Um, yeah.. lousy historians don't.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax

7/24/09 10:44am

@miles: "The horrors of yesteryear, now available in dried date form!"

@Vulcan with Mullet (Vullett? Mullcan?): I like the phrase "new-car evil".

I think the lesson of this episode is: Never send a historian (lousy or not) to do an anthropologists job!

Meanwhile, the myth of fascist efficiency is difficult to erase. Mussolini did not make the trains run on time. You know who makes the trains run on time? The Swiss. The distinctly non-fascist Swiss.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax

7/24/09 12:36pm



@Cloud William:

1) do we really know that Nazis seem more evil now than they did in the 1960s?

2) Gill wasn't a college professor.

3) The idea that the New Deal didn't work and that WWII actually ended the depression is up there with the myth of fascist efficiency... except of course that the former has the huge pseudo-academic right wing think-task apparat pushing it, while the latter is just a lingering trope. The New Deal worked. The only problem was in '36-37, when FDR tried to reduce the deficit prematurely, which tipped the economy back into recession.

4) I wonder why they never landed on the Russian Revolution planet to re-use all the Dr. Zhivago costumes?

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#) Ajax

7/24/09 1:58pm

Just to tag up here late in the game, I think a couple things might bear mentioning:

1) The Trek timeline does include a nigh-apocalyptic conflict that engulfed Earth between the 1960s and the 2300s.

2) Historians only know about the things that are left in the historical record for them to study.

While it seems inconceivable today that the dominant historical narrative of WWII might not be soaked into every nook and cranny of our culture for the rest of time, it's never really made completely clear how much damage was done to the historical record by the Eugenics Wars and their accompanying "post-atomic horror."

Sure, Charlie Parker's work seems to have survived, as well as anything else they needed to fill out a script, but who knows what might be missing? When you think about it, our entire modern conception of (for example) life in Ancient Greece is based on an incredibly scanty set of primary sources, many of them partially destroyed, and all of them preserved completely by chance.

Given a nuclear war that killed 600M people and destroyed much of the planet's infrastructure, caused by a bunch of fiendishly intelligent tyrants who are bound to have understood the utility of destroying or rewriting history, it's unfortunately all too conceivable that hundreds of years later, David Irving might be the most reputable WWII "historian" left standing.

So if we need an excuse other than poor writing for Gill's seeming incompetence and the crew's seeming indifference toward Nazism, I think it's quite fair to note that most history isn't a study of what happened — it's a study of what was written down.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Ajax

7/24/09 2:05pm

Ajax: That's a very good argument about how people in the future might conceive of our history.

However, the real question here is about the people who made the episode, and to a lesser extent, their audience. How did people in the 1960s understand Nazism?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#) Ajax

7/24/09 2:14pm

To be fair, maybe the Zeons were a bunch of annoying, self-appointed superior assholes who controlled the media.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#) Ajax

7/24/09 2:59pm

allurin: I don't have as good an argument about that one. But one aspect not really mentioned yet does occur to me: seriously-treated Nazis are extremely heavy subject matter for a TV series in the '60s, so the producers could very well have received a note from NBC that a previous draft of the script was too dark to be aired — or pre-emptively wrote a lighter treatment anticipating such a note.

Either way I highly doubt that a '60s audience or script-writer, with many more members who actually remembered the events of WWII, had a more charitable view of the Nazis than a contemporary audience would. Most of the scholarship that's come about since then has not so much broken new ground on the horror of that era, but served to further authenticate the horror already known to exist.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Ajax

7/24/09 3:42pm

@PM: nice catch. Hey, miles\_underground, don't tell me your only experience with Star Trek is Enterprise!

@GH: A very fair point! No one's ever looked at this from the Ekosian perspective before. Maybe Zeon-ism was a real threat, eh?

@Ajax: You're probably quite right about the attitude towards Nazis. But if Patterns of Force was lightened up according to network directives, we'd probably have heard about it. Roddenberry was given to complaining at length about network interference with his brilliant scripts.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) Ajax

7/24/09 6:20pm

I don't have anything hidden in an old tilting helmet, but I do have something green...

If there had been a bigger budget for TOS, they would have made their own costumes and it would have looked like a late 60s edition of TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#) Ajax

7/25/09 5:42am

@PM: I wondered if anyone was going to catch that joke.

@alurin: The only episode of Enterprise I saw was the one where T'Pol goes into the Pon Faar and spends 45 minutes fellating her tricorder. (I think it won a Peabody.)

One thing about the ep is that for both the writers and the audience, WWII was in their living memory. Some of them would have been old enough to remember the Nazis rise to power in the 30's, almost all would have at least been listening to radio reports or seeing newsreels about WWII as kids. (I think the easiest thing to do with history is treat it as a series of foregone conclusions, but when you have lived through something you remember that feeling of anything can happen.)

Nimoy is Jewish right? (I'm going by the Adam Sandler song.) He was about 40 when this show was on, so he would have been about 20 when the world discovered the Nazis were exterminating Jews. I can't imagine what sort of an effect that would have on him in particular, but I believe it would have to be profound. I don't think putting on a Nazi uniform for this ep was something he was taking lightly. (Or maybe I'm way off base on this one. What do I know? I never even saw an ep of DS9.)

Side Note: I was at a lecture of Prof. Lipstadt's that David Irving and a couple of his brownshirts crashed. (During the question-and-answer period they started asking her questions about him and as she answered he dramatically strolled in.) This was a few years before he was suing her, but it was after she wrote "Denying the Holocaust".

Irving was handing out copies of his Goering biography and I got both him and Prof. Lipstadt to sign a copy. The book was lost when a bunch of my boxes in storage got water damaged (it was completely unsalvageable, basically just a book-shaped thing of slime which one could argue was what it started out as). Man, I hated to lose that. Irving signed it with his name and the date in Roman numerals, Lipstadt wrote something like, "Don't read this book!"

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax  
7/25/09 12:53pm

@miles: Yes, Nimoy is Jewish, and he was born in 1931, so the rise of Hitler came at a formative time in his youth. Jews didn't have to wait for the news of the death camps to be traumatized by the Third Reich, which was terrorizing Jews long before the formal outlines of the Final Solution were drawn up.

I don't think that anyone involved took the idea of Nazis lightly. But you could read the episode as a message to people in the audience who might be having "fascists made the trains run on time" kind of thoughts.

There's also the problem that it was difficult to portray the violence and evil of the Nazi regime on television in the 60s due to broadcast standards.

So if you haven't watched TOS, TNG, DS9, or Ent, are you a newcomer to Star Trek or a huge Voyager fan?

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)Ajax  
7/26/09 12:40am

I'm not a fan of Star Trek. I don't dislike it or anything, but my overall level of interest is very low. It's pretty much limited to reading these tv club recaps.

But I do grok these discussions. I grok them mightily.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax  
7/26/09 1:26pm

More of a Heinlein fan, then.

[Reply](#)

- [Dwigt](#)Ajax  
2/24/10 7:44pm

Both Nimoy and Shatner (grandfather: Wolf Schattner) are actually Jewish.

[Reply](#)

- Hide replies
- [Rex](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 10:09am

Forget this garbage  
Did you hear Rabin HAS A BOOK OUT???

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Rex

7/23/09 11:11am

Good for him and what not, but if I hear much more about the book I'm going to start referring to him exclusively as the Beast Rabin.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Rex

7/23/09 11:19am

Ok, so since that was totally out of left fiels, I don't feel so bad hijacking this thread (same old stuck at work with a crappy browser excuse for not starting my own).

I'm a bit puzzled by the politics here. On the one hand, Star Trek deserves it's reputation for political optimism, and I applaud it for that. but on the other hand, we've seen a handful of examples where the characters are a bit too comfortable with fascism for comfort. In this episode there was almost an admiration for the efficiency of the nazi regime, and how it was able to achieve practical improvements in society (for both Germany and Eko). Several characters made similar comments in praise of Khan's regime back in "Space Seed". Sure they address the hate issue, and they clearly don't support the Nazi regime overall, but as Zach points out, we're left with the idea that a fascist regime just might work, if only for a few minor details - just omit the hate and the cult-like leader worship and you're good to go!. And then last week we've got what seems like a blatant pitch for the Vietnam war as nothing more sinister than the US protecting Vietnam from the big bad Commies. Sure, at the end they've tacked on an ominous ending, but the tone of the whole show seemed to be pretty imperialistic to me.

[Reply](#)

- [Rex](#)Rex

7/23/09 11:33am

I've always considered Star Trek to be a Cold War metaphor (waspy, democratic Federation at an uneasy ceasefire with the militant and vaguely Asiatic Klingons/Romulans, etc.).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Rex

7/23/09 12:03pm

Hey, I'm as liberal as the next interweber (which is substantially more liberal than the average joe), but I do think there is a bit of a connudrum here:

If it was the future and humans were all evolved and peaceful and stuff, we'd probably have two competing beliefs:

- 1) People should have a right of self determination (i.e. leave other societies alone); and
- 2) We barely survived our ability for mass destruction, you (primitive world) could learn from our example and, if you are going to commit hari kari, we should intervene as the peace loving, evolved folk we are.

The problem with point 1 is it leads to all those prime directive episodes that, but for ignoring the prime directive lots of folks die. The problem with point 2 is that way lies imperealism.

Sometimes they talk themselves out of this box by suggesting "imposing" peace (or whatever) doesn't work in practice and that each society needs to have its own adolescent phase, make its own mistakes, etc. (think about Kirk smashing the "civilized" war computers in A Taste of Armageddon).

Maybe one reason why ST has withstood the test of time despite all the cheese is that it (1) gets you thinking about these types of issues but (2) never deals with them consistently, which is to say, recognizes that there isn't one, simple, answer.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Rex  
7/23/09 12:06pm

Its interesting that you bring up Space Seed, Herc. While Kirk, McCoy, and Scotty are discussing Khan with admiration, Spock takes your position and says "this guy was a criminal and a monster, how can you admire him?" Kirk remarks that there is something of a savage in every man that makes him fascinated with power. Even if the Superego knows that a dictator is evil, the id is still somewhat attracted and fascinated by their power.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Rex  
7/23/09 12:48pm

Those are some good points, John. I'm watching these for the first time since early adolescence / childhood, so some of my preconceptions are being challenged, which is good. I, of course, remembered Kirk and the Enterprise more in the vein of the shining knights of democracy, etc. I mean, Kirk even reads the preamble to the damn constitution in one ep!). but now, as an adult, I'm getting a new appreciation for them. I like that they serve to show the limites of both liberalism, which can evolve into paternalism, and conservatism, which can turn into facism. But the other option - just leave them alone even if we've got the power to potentially help - doesn't work all the time either.

Dumbledore - that's the conversation I was thinking of. Fascination certainly describes Kirk's initial attitude towards Khan, but I think there's a good bit of admiration there also. All in all, I thought that angle of the ep was it's strongest (gender politics, not so much!)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Rex  
7/23/09 12:57pm

The Khan episode tacitly acknowledges another truth of many great leaders- they are, in fact, personally very charismatic. Maybe that sounds a bit trite, but if you've ever met one of these leaders you realize they really do have something the rest of us lack. Clinton had it, Obama certainly has it and, I'm ashamed to admit, maybe if I had met Hitler circa 1933 or say, Idi Amin circa 1970, I might think they were quite engaging as well.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Rex  
7/23/09 12:58pm

A bunch of good points here (aside from the opening post).

There is an authoritarian strain in TOS. They do admire Khan and suggest that National Socialism was on to something. There's also the fact that civilian authorities are almost always dicks, and diplomats don't fare much better (Sarek aside, of course). The other major political strain is anti-utopianism, which shows up everywhere from "This Side of Paradise" to "The Way To Eden" to "The Apple", etc.. The only truly "liberal" theme is that they never have any use for racism, from the inclusion of a black woman as an officer to the misguided racism against Spock in "Balance of Terror" to of course the suggestion that the only thing wrong with the Nazis was their racism.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Rex  
7/23/09 1:24pm

I'm not sure "Patterns of Force" makes that assertion, alurin. Certainly the annexation of other cultures by force, and overall military aggression, was frowned on by the Federation, as is exemplified by the Klingons, et al. Praise for certain aspects of a leader or a society is not tacit endorsement of those

things...just a more objective, dispassionate assessment. It makes Kirk and Spock seem more balanced and rational, not less.

Also, consider these guys are looking at the Nazis and Khan from a historical perspective far removed from experience, much as we look at the despotism of Napoleon, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great. Consider those three were probably not much different from Hitler, yet do we...as the years have distanced us from the ancient world...place them in the same category?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Rex

7/23/09 1:59pm

You're right, MPBC, I take it back. Admiration of the fascist system is limited to Gill, but the episode makes it clear that once you set up a fascist state, you're gonna go looking for some Jews to "solve".

As to your second point, however, I don't think that anyone with a liberal outlook and a grasp of history really admires mass murderers like Alex or tyrants like JC and NB. And we still have a healthy disdain for Genghis Khan, despite a greater distance between us and him than between Kirk and Hitler.

Furthermore, Kirk may see Hitler through a historical perspective, but Star Trek was written by and for people firmly planted in the mid-20th century. If you propose a future tyrant and put in your main characters' mouths some admiration for him, you are saying something about your attitude toward authoritarianism.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Rex

7/23/09 3:39pm

I covered some of this elsewhere, but it may be interesting to repeat/rephrase:

Not sure what the ST message here was, whether it is that you can only create a totalitarian regime by harboring an insider/outsider dynamic, or instead that an insider/outsider view springs up whenever you have created a totalitarian regime. I think its the latter, as Gill thought he could have the fascist state but didn't predict the "Jewish" hatred, etc.

Maybe its a chicken/egg thing. Anyway, good discussion.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Rex

7/23/09 7:38pm

I think Gill explains that he promoted fascism in order to bring the warring states of Ekos together before they annihilated themselves. One could argue that he was merely aiming for a benevolent dictatorship to ride out this part of Ekosian history, but as McCoy says, he failed to see that "absolute power corrupts absolutely" - something that Melakon certainly didn't see as a problem. But adopting the Nazis as a model is both stupid and insane. The Zeons were outsiders from another planet, so maybe fated to be a natural target for a newly-unified warlike planet.

I agree that it certainly would have been a more effective story with "generic" fascist costumes, etc. But that wouldn't have saved the bad writing and lame jokes.

I'm not sure Napoelon belongs in the same category as Julius, Alexander, and Hitler.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Rex

7/23/09 7:47pm

"I'm not sure Napoelon belongs in the same category as Julius, Alexander, and Hitler. "

One could argue that Hitler belongs in a category all his own. But Napoleon launched wars of conquest which killed millions, so I would put him a category with Alexander and Caesar.

"absolute power corrupts absolutely" is another trope that shows up in various guises in Star Trek episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [meyerRex](#)  
7/23/09 8:39pm

Hitler, Stalin, and Mao are in the same category, I'd say. Alexander and the Caesars (and many, many others were merely bloodthirsty tyrants. I'm no big fan of Napoleon, but I understand that he initially fought defensive wars and let the defeated states mostly run their own affairs (aside from taxes and conscription).

[Reply](#)

- [alurinRex](#)  
7/24/09 11:29am

The parsing of mass murderers is a vain business. How much credit do you get for killing your "own" citizens in peacetime vs. killing in wars. Which wars were defensive and "necessary" and which were not?

Backing up, I think that the question is whether the stain of blood washes off over time, or whether we choose to ignore the victims of some leaders vs. the victims of others. Roman emperors and Alexander get a pass, because we happen to admire the classical civilizations of Rome and Greece. Genghis Khan doesn't 'cause we don't like Mongols.

I think Patterns of Force does imply that Gill gave more weight to the mythical virtues of fascism than to the crimes of fascists. I think it also indirectly implies something about the attitude towards fascism in the postwar America that the episode was aimed at. I wonder if any real historians have examined this?

[Reply](#)

- [meyerRex](#)  
7/24/09 9:01pm

@alurin - Good points. Come to think of it, Caesar's invasion of Gaul (and even Rome, I guess) and Hitler's invasion of Poland were declared "defensive" based on lies. And I don't know which image is more disturbing - heaps of concentration camp bodies or lines of crucifixions all along the Appian Highway.

And the fascist efficiency myths do seem to be just that: myths. Hitler and Mussolini came to power and solved the economic and unemployment problems by raising armies of millions. German designs were top-notch, but the production system was a mess.

As for a possible fascist-leaning mindset during the Cold War, I expect that a lot of that was just a response to fear of the other superpower - the USSR. A tense military situation is bound to get folks fidgety about maintaining "order" and "security".

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 10:11am

Those "turn you into sponge cubes" devices really freaked me out when I first saw them  
One of the creepier Sci Fi devices when you're a kid. Great review again.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 10:21am

I agree - they're more effective than you'd think. I guess the fact that you don't know which person has been powderized helps; and I gotta say, the fact that it was the woman was surprising. We lose female crewmembers of their own volition from time to time, but does anybody know if this is our first female redshirt death?

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 10:29am

Wait a minute, what am I thinking? Of course there were others. There was, for example, that chick in "The Deadly Years" who radioactively aged to death. (Although if memory serves—which, see above, it might not—her shirt was actually blue.) I guess I was thinking that it's not a true redshirt death if they aren't at Vasquez rocks.

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 10:32am

I do not avoid women, Mandrake but I do deny them my essence.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 10:35am

Didn't Charlie X make a woman faceless back in the day, because she laughed at him or something? That'd kill her I would think. No eyes/nose/mouth= creeeepy.

"Hey, see that hot new Ensign? Nice body, butterface...."

\*rimshot

Thanks, I'm in the Delta Quadrant all week, folks.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 11:30am

Adolph-

I use that line all the time and no one ever knows what the hell I'm talking about.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 11:41am

I could be misremembering here, since I haven't actually watched "Name" recently, but I want to say that the dark-haired Yeoman who gets polyhedrized and crushed is actually wearing blue...

(Although I acknowledge that "redshirt" is a perfectly acceptable generic term for "person most likely to die before the opening credits are finished.")

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 11:42am

I could be misremembering here, since I haven't actually watched "Name" recently, but I want to say that the dark-haired Yeoman who gets polyhedrized and crushed is actually wearing blue...



(Although I acknowledge that "redshirt" is a perfectly acceptable generic term for "person most likely to die before the opening credits are finished.")

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 11:42am

Rats. Lousy double-post!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 11:48am

Nah, she's wearing actual red:  
<http://tos.trekcore.com/gal...>

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 12:51pm

POE

O  
P  
E

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 12:52pm

The real question is, if you follow the cubes, shell-game-like, does the right one get destroyed. I have done this every time I've seen this episode, but I keep forgetting my conclusion right afterwards. I \*think\* I remember establishing it's the wrong one, but I'm not sure.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 12:53pm

[tos.trekcore.com/gallery](http://tos.trekcore.com/gallery)If you browse from , you can find it pretty easily. and they've got plenty of sweet screen caps from all the eps, too.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 1:12pm

Yes, if you follow the cubes as if in a shell game, the correct crewmember is killed. I remember following it closely as a kid: thinking "Wait, that's the woman!" as Rojan crumbled the polyhedron; then intensely wondering if the correct person would spring out of the shape when Rojan pressed the button, then being duly impressed when he did.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 1:35pm

The picture link doesn't work? Huh. It works just fine in Firefox.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 2:28pm

Don't rub it in! - I'm stuck with IE 6.

[Reply](#)

- [Orthodox Athiest](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 4:31pm

I remember the good old days when Microsoft was pissed on for bundling IE with their browser.  
Ahhh, memories.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 4:38pm

That was back when Netscape was the default browser at my corporation - I was plenty pissed when we switched to IE.

[Reply](#)

- [Orthodox Athiest](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 7:07pm

I found the whole escape so weird because Netscape was one of the primary opponents of microsoft but by the time all the monopoly lawyers were done with micro, netscape had already gone bye bye.  
Endearing.

But I am excited to see how google will handle its monopoly charges.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)The Pizza Monster  
7/23/09 8:37pm

The sponge-crushing always hit me the same as the transporter malfunction in TMP. The thought of it is just morbid. As a kid I was worried that both redshirts would re-form when Rojan did the belt, including the crushed one.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 11:52am

Energy Barriers

Since it came up here, you've revived a nagging issue:

There's an energy barrier in the Pilot, one here and one in ST V. Any of these have any basis in scientific fact/theory? I've never heard of such a thing, but I'm no scientist and it would surprise me some that they went back to the same convention over and over without any theory at all behind it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 12:50pm

The energy barrier at the edge of the galaxy is pure sci fi nonsense. There IS no edge to the galaxy, it just peters out. Where would the energy come from, anyway?

There is, of course, a black hole at the center of the galaxy though. That would make for a cool Star Trek episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 1:36pm

The Great Barrier in Trek V is at the galactic core, or the center of the galaxy...unlike the barrier seen in the two episodes of TOS. Confused? You should be.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 1:37pm

By claiming that their might have been a movie between The Voyage Home and The Undiscovered Country, you're just encouraging them.

I prefer to believe that the series went from ST IV to ST VI because V is an unlucky numeral.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 3:36pm

I remember reading in David Gerrold's The World of Star Trek (1973) that in fact Isaac Asimov was consulted about this during the writing of the second pilot "Where No Man Has Gone Before," circa 1965, and essentially he said "why not?"

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 3:53pm

It's important to remember that Asimov was trained as a biochemist. And that positronic brains would explode.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 4:00pm

As far as anybody knows, the edge of the galaxy is pretty undefined and just kind of fizzles out with fewer and fewer stars, eventually to the point where their aren't any.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 4:41pm

Yeah, I always wondered, why not just go over it? or even under it? The new special effects give the barrier a much greater sense of scale, which helps, but it still strains my suspension of disbelief

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 7:41pm

I always wondered that myself. Oh no! Its a very thin ribbon in our immediate path!

As Spock would say, "his pattern indicates two dimensional thinking."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/24/09 11:54am

The radiation belt is an interesting analogy. Hmmm.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 11:16am

Kirk Noir?

One of the conventions of crime noir that I rather enjoy is the idea that the protagonist will put himself in situations where he will get beat up in order to further his case. A classic example is Chinatown and Nickelson's broken nose, and I very much enjoyed Brick's use of this to good effect (especially how the hero always took off his glasses before getting hit).

Zack's sentence above, "Kirk's managed to do some good by punching his way through somebody else's problems" reminded me of this, but in the sense of the more classic hero where Kirk does all the pummelling. Made me think that TOS might have been more interesting if Kirk was less of a classic hero and more of a noir hero:

"Ok, Spock, here's what we're going to do. I'm going to go get beat up. While that happens, you signal Scotty for backup..."

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 11:24am

Agreed. When Kirk's plan does involve allowing himself to get the crap kicked out of him, Spock is the one doing the kicking. And who doesn't enjoy that?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 3:42pm

Agreed it would not be Kirk, but it would make for interesting TV.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 3:54pm

Yes, good point john. I would like to see a space opera with a noirish protagonist along those lines. Firefly comes close; I think there's an episode where the hero's plan relies on him being stripped naked and abandoned in the desert...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 7:40pm

Agree with PM. Mal got beat up alot, but mostly due to him not being very good at avoiding it. Also, he was too stubborn to stay down when he got hit, another somewhat anti-hero characteristic but not the noir type.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/23/09 7:56pm

Maybe I'm misunderstanding the thread of the thread, but seems to me Kirk got beaten up plenty of times! It's right there in Shatner's contract: torn shirt and/or bloody lip in at least 25% of the shooting scripts.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
7/24/09 10:22am

But Kirk typically gets beaten up when things go wrong, not as part of a plan to expose the enemy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/24/09 11:53am

Alurin is correct, and Meyer is misunderstanding the original point:

A fundamental component of much of Film Noir and mid century detective fiction is the hero who succeeds not by being smarter, faster, or better than the next guy, but by being persistent. A classic example is the detective who tries to meet the bad guy at a party with the express purpose of being hawled off by henchmen to get beat up. During the beating, some little clue gets dropped and it gives the hero a thread to follow. After several beatings and several clues, the mystery is solved.

In summary, Kirk gets in a lot of fights- all of which he wins. Mal Reynolds gets in a lot of fights- most of which he loses. The film noir protagonist gets in fights on purpose, knowing he will lose, but having an ulterior motive.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet

7/24/09 9:07pm

I thought I might be misunderstanding the conversation. The noir trope makes me think of the Humphrey Bogart/Sam Spade/etc. movies in a slightly different light. Interesting!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [FortyTwo](#)Zack Handlen

7/23/09 10:46am

"It is green."

I'm much more familiar with TNG than TOS, so I was delighted to learn that Data's line, "It is green," in "Relics" was a quick reference to "By Any Other Name."

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)FortyTwo

7/23/09 11:11am

Agreed! That really was a nice little touch.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)FortyTwo

7/23/09 11:54am

I never picked up on that, although now I can remember both scenes clearly. Hmmm.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)FortyTwo

7/23/09 4:19pm

Surprised they got that past Rick "TOS-hater" Berman.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)FortyTwo

7/23/09 4:45pm

@edked: by the time your episode stars Jimmy Doohan as Scotty, you have to let go of the TOS-hate. In fact, didn't that episode feature a re-creation of the TOS bridge?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)FortyTwo

7/23/09 6:08pm

A recreated TOS bridge, and they reused the transporter sound from TOS when the beam Scotty out of stasis.

[Reply](#)

- [enderjed](#)FortyTwo  
7/26/09 5:08am

When "Relics" first aired, as soon as Scotty asked Data "What is it?" I nearly fell off the couch laughing and yelling "It's green! It's fuckin' green!" My ex-wife still doesn't understand why that was so funny.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 1:31pm

Music

Both of these episodes have some new music written for them.

George Duning wrote a brass & snare drum Nazi march for Patterns of Force. This must have been taped during the recording session for Return To Tomorrow - Jeff Bond refers to Patterns as Duning's 2nd Star Trek assignment. The rest of the episode is tracked.

(Shout out to Sol Kaplan: there's a longish excerpt from the Doomsday Machine soundtrack, when Kirk & Spock are in jail and get ready to use some mad science to laser open the door. The music is from the segment where Kirk & McCoy & Decker are talking on board the Constellation.)

Fred Steiner wrote music for By Any Other Name. Excerpts are available on CD:

[amazon/Star-Trek-Two-Recorded-Paramount/dp/B00000153U](https://www.amazon.com/Star-Trek-Two-Recorded-Paramount/dp/B00000153U)

The music includes a "moody brass and woodwind motif for the aliens that was modified into a rapid-file 'stinger' effect for sequences..." where the aliens zap the crewmen into styrofoam. Steiner adapted the seduction music from his score for What A Little Girls Made Of.

Steiner's is a part score, there's a lot of tracked music. Esp the sequences with the energy barrier.

What's the music in the scene where Scotty is drinking in his cabin with the alien? Is that new to this episode, or is it from the Tribbles score?

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)JimZipCode  
7/23/09 2:04pm

The music in the drinking contest scenes seemed to have been at least partially recycled from the mischievous-hallucinatory-Irishman theme in "Shore Leave."

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode  
7/23/09 3:34pm

I think the drinking music in "By Any Other Name" is new to the episode, and is not a version of the Finnegan music in "Shore Leave" (despite both being in 6/8 time). Nor does it derive from "Tribbles." Nor do I think any other episode reused it thereafter. I love it.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode  
7/23/09 8:15pm

Cue Riley:

"And now, 'I'll Take You Home Again Kathleen'. ONE! MORE! TIME!"

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
7/23/09 9:20pm

@Jim: how do you come to know so much about the music for TOS?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
7/24/09 11:54am

I bought this book:  
<http://www.amazon.com/Music...>

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Chartex](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 4:20pm

Jive Turkey

Mr. Handlen, in the sixth paragraph, where you write, "the quick-fix ending doesn't jive with everything else we've seen" — I'm pretty sure you mean "jibe," not "jive." Granted, a little jive is always a good thing, but "jibe" is the word that means "to be in accord."

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Chartex  
7/23/09 6:30pm

No apologies necessary then. You're owning it! I like that.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Chartex  
7/23/09 8:51pm

It really is "jibe", though.

[Reply](#)

- [Vulcan With a Mullet](#)Chartex  
7/24/09 2:17am

I've just invented a blog that is self-criticizing! No need for nitpickers!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Chartex  
7/26/09 1:25pm

OK, I've heard of people using "jive" for "jibe", "diffuse" for "defuse", "granite" for "granted", and "hone in" for "home in", but do people really use "pacific" for "specific"? Can you cite any pacific instances?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [dbrodbeck](#)Chartex  
3/07/18 9:37pm

I know this is a thousand years later, but the review also uses 'suppose to' instead of 'supposed to' which drives me insane.....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum](#)Zack Handlen

7/23/09 3:51pm

Candybars and Cancer

I'm sorry to be dense but I don't understand that metaphor at all.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum  
7/23/09 4:10pm

You do something fun, and something else really good happens; it doesn't make for exciting drama.

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)DJ Jazzy Jeff Mangum  
7/24/09 1:24am

Also, the candy bar gives you diabetes, so you don't have cancer but now if you eat a Twinkie you go into a coma. I'm pretty sure it was a Twilight Zone episode.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 6:18pm

Low forehead, which denotes stupidity.

my favorite moment in the episode was Spock's raised eyebrow at that statement. classic.

the evil second in command here was also the leader of the space hippies. he made a good villain.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)tibber  
7/23/09 8:25pm

Good catch! I didn't even recognize him. His dislike of Spock's ears makes perfect sense now.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Zack Handlen  
7/23/09 11:21am

Get Drunk, Get Mad, and Make-out

Pretty solid three-part formula for happiness, when you think about it.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Master Plaster Blaster Caster  
7/23/09 8:02pm

That's pretty much my daily routine.

Except for the making-out part.

[Reply](#)

- [Mike Zimmerman](#)Zack Handlen  
12/19/14 1:47pm

I don't think the hating of the Zeons is non-sensical. Dictator strongmen always need someone to hate on, to position as the cause of all the society's problems. The Zeons were perfect for that, just as the Jews were perfect for Hitler. They were outsiders, the "other." The cause of all society's ills that the dear leader is going to eradicate. He foments hate to unite the masses and get them on his side. (I'm only just now going through Star Trek TOS on Netflix and watched this episode the other night.)

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Zack Handlen



7/24/09 10:19am

Spock to Kirk: "You'd make a very convincing Nazi."  
is just a hell of a funny line when you consider it's being delivered Jew-to-Jew.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/08/16 10:35pm

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade.

[Reply](#)

- [dbrodbeck](#)Zack Handlen

3/07/18 9:48pm

Pretty sure it is 'Ekos' not 'Eko'.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Omega Glory" / "The Ultimate Computer"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published August 6, 2009

[Comments \(134\)](#)



On my way home yesterday, I stopped at Newbury Comics looking for a Seagal movie for the weekend (*DON'T YOU JUDGE ME*), and I ended up buying (in addition to *Marked For Death*) a copy of the Nicolas Cage *Wicker Man*. I've seen *Wicker Man* probably six times now. I'll almost certainly be watching it again soon. In addition to the legitimately good movies in my collection collection, I also own copies of *LXG*, *Exorcist II: The Heretic*, *Sound Of Thunder*, *Blade Trinity*, *Batman and Robin*, *The Swarm*, *Viva Kneivel*, *Grizzly*, *Ninja III: The Domination*, *Gymkata*, *Death Wish III*... Oh, and all the *Friday the 13th* movies except the latest one. I don't mention this to brag (okay, maybe a little to brag), but to provide some context. Because when I say I found the last ten minutes of "The Omega Glory" to be wildly entertaining—I'm not saying they were actually *good*.

We've had some weird episodes in our run so far—"Wolf In the Fold" springs to mind—but, at the risk of being immediately contradicted, I'd say "Glory" has to've take the weirdest turn yet. For the first two-thirds, it's pretty straightforward, if tedious. The Enterprise visits the planet Omega IV, and they find another ship already orbiting Omega, the *U.S.S. Exeter*. The *Exeter* doesn't answer any hails, and when Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and the soon-to-give-his-life-for-the-cause Lt. Galloway beam over, they find a bunch of empty uniforms and piles of white crystal. McCoy studies the crystals, and tells Kirk that they're actually the corpses of the missing crewmen; the water has been drained from their bodies.

So right now, you're thinking, it's some kind of monster. We've had the Salt Vampire, some kind of aqua-hungry nosferatu doesn't seem entirely out of the question. Disappointingly, though, this is all just the result of a horrible biological weapon that originated on the planet below. When Kirk and the others make the next step down to Omega (a helpful final log entry from dying officer informs them they'll be doomed otherwise), Captain Tracey, the last surviving crewmen of the *Exeter*, is running a village full of Siberian looking people named Kohms, and using his phaser technology to help wage wars against the rival Yangs, a white and warlike tribe that, according to Tracey, is too savage to be negotiated with. Tracey breaks the bad news to Kirk that he and his men are now stuck on Omega; they're all infected with the disease that killed the crew of the *Exeter*, and staying on the planet is the only way they can keep from dying of it too.

Of course, things are a wee bit more complicated than that. Spock and Galloway soon discover Tracey's phaser battles, which directly violate the Prime Directive; then Tracey shows up, no longer even pretending to be nice, kills Galloway, and lays the situation on the line for Kirk. He believes he's found a functional immortality on Omega, and one that, with some help from McCoy, he'll share with the rest of the galaxy—for a price. I started getting worried that this was going to turn into *Star Trek: Insurrection* (a movie I didn't hate when I first saw it, but has such a terrible reputation among my friends that I shudder even at the name), but I needn't have. The immortality hope is a fool's gold. The natives on Omega are just exceptionally long lived because of the effect of the virus on natural selection. Which doesn't exactly make sense, but the short answer is, this is not anything that would travel.

While McCoy's figuring this out, Kirk and Spock are thrown into jail, and Kirk has a chance to get friendly with a captive pair of the vicious Yangs. The fight sequence here is fun; by now, the Kirk/Spock byplay is so well drawn that it manages to shine in even the worst episodes. Spock figures out that the bars on the cell windows can be pulled free, and Kirk and the Yang man team up to clear their window. But Kirk is too trusting, and as soon as he turns his back, the Yang knocks him over the head and makes off with his female buddy. (If you suspect that this will be important later when the Yangs re-enter the episode, give yourself a cookie.)

The escaped Yang gathers his fellows together for one big attack on the village, and not even Tracey's phaser prowess can save the Kohms. The budget constraints on the series really show here, as we don't actually see anything of the battle; Tracey does his best to sell a wild-eyed monologue describing the carnage, but it doesn't quite work. One of the problems of the first part of the episode is that we spend so much time with crazy Tracey and Kirk and the others that we never get any real sense of the conflict between the Yangs and the Kohms, which turns out to be a lot more important than you'd imagine.

Just how important? Well... are you ready for this? After Tracey and Kirk do some running around, the Yangs arrive and take everybody captive. The Kohms have been wiped out, and while Kirk and Spock and McCoy are waiting for their fate to be decided, Kirk muses on how the biological warfare that most likely forced the Yangs out of the cities, turning them into the bloodthirsty savages they've become, is an awful lot like the Cold War back on Earth. And then he says, in a line of dialogue that heralds the death knell of sense in "Omega," "Huh, Yangs sounds like Yankees." And Spock says, "And Kohms sounds like Communists."

That's because—they are! And this isn't Earth, and nobody ever even hints at a parallel universe. Instead, the screenplay (by Gene Roddenberry himself) posits the parallel evolution of a humanoid race that not only developed political conflicts resembling our own right down to the names... Aw jeez, I almost feel bad for telling you this. I feel like I'm spoiling somebody's birthday. I mean, I'd actually heard about this in advance, but it caught me completely by surprise, and while this is actually a terrible, terrible episode, there's something wonderful in finding out for yourself just how bad it gets.

But hey, they don't pay me the big bucks not to deliver on my implications, so here goes. The Yangs worship an American flag. And one of them (the one that bonked Kirk over the head earlier) starts speaking to the flag in a phonetic rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance. Kirk joins in, because he's got this wacky idea that he knows what's going on here, but before he can convince the Yangs he's right, Tracey starts trying to turn the Yangs against him. He points out that Spock looks a lot like the picture of the devil in the Yangs sacred book (and yeah, the resemblance is pretty goddamn ridiculous), so we get some trial by combat nonsense. Kirk wins, Spock gets Sulu and some red-shirts to beam down, and now that Kirk has things in hand, he gets out the Yangs most precious document, and gives them all a big speech about how awesome democracy is.

Because, see, the piece of paper is the Constitution of the United States.

This doesn't make any sense at all; and what's great is that it doesn't even *try* to make sense. A more cowardly television show—one of your *Twilight Zones* or *Battlestar Galacticas*—would've given us some third act twist to explain why an alien race that hasn't mastered space travel has managed to work up a Constitution that matches ours *even down to the handwriting*. But not our *Trek*! Never mind the creepy way the Yangs are all white to a man, or the fact that the Kohms,

despite Kirk's admonitions to the contrary, seem to be basically the bad guys. Let's just relish the richness of the loogey Roddenberry has hawked into the face of reason and logic. This is sublime awfulness, gang. Dare I say it? This approaches the glory of "HOW'D IT GET BURNED?"

The second episode this week, "The Ultimate Computer" (a surprisingly literal title for the series), isn't anywhere near as terrible. It's got a great guest star, a decent hook, and some edge of the seat battle sequences. There's something a little flat to it, though, and while I never had a "You've gotta be fucking kidding" moment while watching, my mind did wander. The perfect *Trek* episode needs something more than just basic competency to be memorable; "Computer" entertains, but never really excites, not even when the stakes are at their highest.

As befits their status as The Ship That Has To Do Damn Near Everything, the *Enterprise* gets called to a star base and told they are about to receive a singular honor. Dr. Richard Daystrom, the computer genius, has perfected his masterwork, the M-5 system. To test it, Starfleet is going to hold a war game; the M-5 will take control of one ship, and square off against four others to test its combat readiness and ability to run a vessel. The *Enterprise* gets put under M-5's command, which means a steep-but-temporary crew reduction (down from 400 to 20, which includes our leads and a reasonable cushion of expendable ensigns) and a lot of hand-wringing about the horrors of replacing humans with machines.

Which, quite frankly, I don't buy. I can understand the relevancy of addressing the question to a modern audience, but this isn't swapping auto-factory workers with mechanical arms. The M-5 may be the most sophisticated machine in the universe, but it has no physical presence. It can't beam down to a planet, it can't open negotiations with new life, and it sure as hell can't fix itself when something goes wrong. "Computer" goes out of its way to show the dangers of autonomy, but while it's charming to see that even in The Future, people still struggle with the same problems, I'm not all that interested in a *Trek* that feels the need to explain why technology is a harsh mistress. John Henry versus the steam engine this ain't.

Besides, has there every been a sci-fi story in the history of anything where giving a computer complete control *didn't* end in the computer going psycho? It's like generations of writers spent their childhoods getting mocked by somebody's graphing calculator. From the moment we find out that the M-5 will be running the ship—into simulated combat, no less—we all know where this is going. I'll give the ep the benefit of the doubt and assume the story wasn't quite as predictable to audiences at the time, but it's still disappointing to have things go exactly as you'd expect they would, right down the line. Hell, Kirk even talks the machine into offing itself!

For those of you who haven't seen this in a while: initially the M-5 is in top shape, acing the war games and even inspiring a commodore to refer to Kirk as "Captain Dunsel," slang which basically means he's superfluous on his own ship. (This is a surprisingly dick move on the commodore's part, too. He might be trying to make some grand comment about how they'll all be outmoded some day, but it really comes off as an attack, and a thoroughly unmotivated one at that.) But then the M-5 starts acting up, destroying an unmanned freighter for no reason and then openly attacking the four ships it had earlier engaged in the games. Lots of frantic running around trying to shut down the system ensues, including Daystrom himself (whose along for the ride and not entirely right in the head) trying to convince the M-5 to stand down. But in the end, only Kirk can explain to it that by killing humans, it violated its purpose. I guess it makes sense that Kirk gives the speech. He's done it so many times by this point that he could do it in his sleep.

But like I said, "Computer" *is* competent, and it has its good bits. There's a lot of great Kirk/Spock/McCoy dialogue, and Kirk's comments on how strange it feels to actually be at odds with his own ship are nicely done. The battle at the episode's climax, while not exactly showy (shades of "Omega" here in that we hear about a lot of things happening, but we don't see a lot of them), is fairly intense; Kirk having to sit back and watch while the *Enterprise* murders hundreds is a exciting in a way the rest of the episode doesn't quite manage. And best of all, we get William Marshall as Daystrom. Marshall played the King of Cartoons on *Pee-Wee's Playhouse* (after Gilbert Lewis left), but to me, he's Blacula, from *Blacula* and *Scream Blacula Scream*. SBS is a mixed bag (it's got Pam Grier, but it's not, y'know, Pam Grier *enough*), but *Blacula*, goofy title aside, is surprisingly great, and Marshall's the reason why. He's one of the all time coolest screen vampires, and while "Computer" doesn't give him a ton to do, he does manage to find the tragedy at the heart of the character: as the others note, this is a genius who peaked early, and has spent every day since trying to prove he

wasn't a fluke. Maybe if we'd focused a little more on that, "Computer" might've been more memorable.

#### Grades:

"The Omega Glory": D+

"The Ultimate Computer": B

#### Stray Observations:

- Great exchange between Kirk and Spock after Spock executes a neck pinch: "Pity you can't teach me that." "I have tried, Captain."
- Lousy as the "Omega" climax is, McCoy gets a terrific line: "Spock, I've found that evil usually triumphs unless good is very careful."
- Good one from Spock during "Computer": "Captain Wesley is a dedicated commander. I would regret serving aboard the instrument of his death."
- Next week we finish up the second season with "Bread and Circuses" and "Assignment: Earth."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (134)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:17am

Hey Zack I think there's something amiss with the postings, they disappear ...which means you won't see this anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 10:24am

Ahh there we go.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 10:32am

He maybe can't but I can! Hello pizza monster!

Nice write-ups as always Zach, and I just feel bad for you that you had to sit through the Omega Glory. Like some others here with little or no life, I'm also watching along with the reviews, but my dedication couldn't stretch to having to watch The Omega Glory again. The Cage-Wicker Man of Star Trek is a lovely way of describing it. Worst! S2! Episode! Ever! Proof, if proof were needed, that Roddenberry is more of an ideas man than an actual writer - other people do seem to take his ideas and run with them much more successfully (not to try and diminish him of course).

I think The Ultimate Computer is pretty much what people think of when they think of a Star Trek computer though. Box on Kirk's chair talked into killing itself because Blackula was upset. As a side note, The Ultimate Computer is one of the few episodes which really benefits from the enhanced HD special effects. They look lovely in other episodes, but here they do help to heighten the tension and increase the plausibility.

And I can't think of the word immortality without thinking of Rassilon saying it in The Five Doctors. "Immmmmmmmmortality!!" If he rolled the M any more he'd have flattened himself with it.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 10:50am

Even as a kid, I thought "Omega Glory" was pretty damned stupid. It's one of those TOS episodes I really try to forget.

"The Ultimate Computer", on the other hand, was one of my faves 'cause of the space battles. Then and now, I loves me some spaceships shooting at each other.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 1:05pm

Yeah, but it still ain't no Balance of Power.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 1:15pm

Oh, for sure. But it was still pretty cool.

Actually, I think the best space battles on any TV series were in "Babylon 5" and "BSG".

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 5:27pm

"This Seasons Inexpensive Time Travelling Episode"

I hope you don't mean "Assignment: Earth" because that was always a favourite of mine ever since I was a kid, and I was kind of bummed years later when I learned that it was a backdoor pilot for a spinoff that never got picked up. I would've enjoyed that show.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 5:41pm

I mentioned this a few weeks ago during a recap of an unrelated episode, but I'm pretty much 100% with Cloud William on this one. If you're not willing to make headspace for the contrivance of a parallel Earth with parallel cowboys and commies, then yes, the discussion ends right there.

But if you *are*\*, then you simply have to give props for a deftly plotted episode featuring a rare Trek antagonist that can meet and overcome Kirk's usual gambits on Kirk's own terms. You really get a sense of what a remarkable human specimen is a Starfleet captain in this episode.

(Compare to Khan Noonian Singh, erstwhile physical and intellectual superman, whose threat is derailed in about three seconds by a plastic belaying pin Kirk pulls out of a panel in Engineering. Captain Tracey is in there punching right up until the very end.)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 7:26pm

For some reason, I probably only saw "Omega Glory" once, many years ago. I knew about the stupid, stupid, stupid Declaration of Independence and U.S. flag reveal, but watching it last night, I had little memory of much of anything else in it.

To my surprise, I found myself really enjoying it. I don't know why, but I love it whenever Enterprise runs into one of its sister vessels (wessels?) The stuff aboard Exeter was nice and creepy. Capt. Tracy

was a great character. The set-up of the bio-virus and the war between the Yangs and Khoms was intriguing. Cloud William was big and dumb without going over the top and his cute gal wore a miniskirt made from what must have been the pelt of a small gray squirrel. McCoy charms the ladies (which actually seems to happen a lot), and the comic zingers weren't too frequent or too cornball.

And then, at the 35:00 mark, it jumped the rails completely with the ridiculous United States stuff. If I hadn't already known it was coming up, I would have had Zack's reaction - "What?!? This blows!"

Maybe I was just in a good mood, but as it wrapped up I (partially) forgave the stupid, stupid, stupid U.S. Founding Fathers tripe and ended up liking the episode. Plus, I really liked Kirk's "these are more than hollow words" speech - words worth saying delivered in a way only Shatner could.

If only they had made the planet's history only similar to the U.S. (same ideas written in much the same way, but NOT IN THE SAME DAMNED WORDS WITH THE SAME GODDAMN FLAG), it could have ranked up there with the best.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#) The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 8:33pm

Let me just say that if you can't accept parallel Earths and Kirk talking computers to death, you shouldn't be watching Star Trek. Stick to watching tedious police procedurals where the criminal always confesses to the cops, without a lawyer, at the 48 minute mark.

That said, "Omega Glory" is a bad episode. It's not because of the absurdly precise duplication of our Earth, down to the handwriting on the Constitution (though that is absurd). It's not because of the egregious patriotic treacle at the end (though that is egregious). It's not even because of the disturbing racial theme (while disturbing, I think we can give Star Trek a pass on that one, given that the Ultimate Computer features a deft bit of race-blind casting).

The problem is that the ridiculously precise duplication of Earth culture is the big reveal, and also the mechanism by which Kirk saves the day. In "Bread and Circuses" or "A Piece of the Action" or any of the other near-duplicate Earth episodes, the parallelism is a given. Usually by the end of the teaser we know we're on a planet full of TV-watching Romans, or whatever. It may be absurd, but it's the premise, and then you can go on from there to see how things play out. By contrast, In "the Omega Glory", it's the twist ending, thus requiring the viewer to ratchet up his or her suspension of disbelief right at the dramatic climax. On top of that, Kirk is then able to recite various American patriotic documents from memory, which becomes a plot point. "Bread and Circuses" didn't rely on Kirk being able to quote Seneca or Pliny.

"Omega Glory" doesn't take the idea of a parallel Earth where the Cold War turned into a biological WW III as a premise, it uses it as a plot device. That's why "The Omega Glory" is lousy Star Trek.

(no offense to Cloud William's namesake)

(and, like Meyer, I do like it every time the Enterprise encounters another Starfleet ship, particularly another Constitution Class ship, even though I know they only did that because they were too cheap to build more models)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 12:11am

Dear Alurin,

Yes!

And thank you for an insightful observation which goes right to the heart of the suckiness of this episode as opposed to so many equally un believable premises that still work. I always argue that

once a film sets up it's rules and expectations, it should only be judged by those rules- not what you wish the film had been.

You are right: Omega Glory effectively breaks those rules and that's why we all hate it so...

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 10:07am

@allurin: That's fair, I suppose. Technically it's a combination of Kirk finally winning a fight, Yet Another Unexplained Vulcan Mind Power, and an open communicator allowing the Enterprise to finally send down the cavalry that saves the day, rather than Kirk knowing the Pledge of Allegiance (he can't quote the Preamble, remember, until he has it in front of him. Much like many of today's Americans!)

Given that much, the Pledge of Allegiance serves the same plot purpose as any other smooth talking from rascally old James T. It just keeps them from being summarily killed long enough to arrange a fair fight, which in turn delays things long enough for Vulcan hoodoo to work, which finally results in a redshirt beamdown that puts the Yongs right back in the "they really ARE gods!" camp.

So maybe I'll modify my agreement with Cloud William slightly, as I see on re-reading that he gave it an A+. Best Trek episode? Not. Weaker-than-average Trek episode? Perhaps. Unwatchably bad Trek episode? Not at all. With "Spock's Brain" and "The Way to Eden" in the mix, I think you have to give "Omega Glory" credit for the first 45 minutes and bump it up to at least a C.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must die!](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 10:38am

Richelieu, et al:

I once heard something attributed to Roger Ebert that has always stuck with me:

In creating a fictional world, whether fantasy, sci fi etc, you are allowed to suspend the audience's belief exactly once. Most people will go along with you at your initial premise (see, it's the future and people go flying around the galaxy and there are all these aliens...) (see, it's an alternate universe where Hitler won World War II...) (see, it's this other universe where a spice called melange has geriatric and presciential properties...).

Once the audience makes that first leap with you, that's all you get and then you have to be true to the construct you've created. If you do this, things tend to go smoothly, but if you fail to follow the rules you set forth at the outset, your audience will get thrown out of the picture and they'll think you have crap.

The US flag, the handwritten Constitution, etc, all threw us out of the future/other world context. Thus, OG sucks.

However, someone did point out, rightly I believe, the awesomeness of Kirk going mano y mano with another Starfleet Captain. Usually all the Starfleet types are pointy eared bureaucrats that Kirk outfoxes. Here, we get a sense that Kirk isn't a superman and that there are other people just as good (or better) than he is. Well played.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 10:44am

@Richelieu: You have stated the problem much more succinctly than I!



@Ajax: I stand corrected. Nevertheless, I stand by my basic point. The plot is a series of cheats. First we think the episode is about a scary virus that killed the crew of the Exeter. Oops, that virus isn't a problem if you stay on the planet more than a couple of hours. The fountain of youth that Tracey is supposedly motivated by? Oops, doesn't exist. Hey, guess what kids, the REAL plot is that these guys are almost exactly like us!

All of which points out a deeper problem with the episode, which is that Roddenberry doesn't trust either the audience or his own story. The crew of a derelict Federation starship go native on a planet that's undergone a nuclear war. Star Trek meets Mad Max. That's a perfectly entertaining concept for an episode, and the fact that these people are living in a post-nuclear wasteland would seem enough of a cautionary tale to send the message: "nuclear war bad!" You could even have Spock underline things by saying "It would mean that these people fought the war your Earth avoided." But no, Roddenberry has to throw in a scary virus, and immortality, and the fucking "E plegnista".

So I would rank this episode among the dregs of TOS for those reasons. Does that make it unwatchably bad? Frankly, I'm not sure there is such a thing. It's still Star Trek, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 11:07am

I quite agree with Alurin. It has always seemed to me that in the best dramas, the opening sequence should lay out the theme to be explored in microcosm, and everything else should flow from that, surprisingly yet inevitably. If a scene does not illustrate theme, plot, or character ( and preferably all three at once) it shouldn't be there.

If for example, the first dodge, the false virus scare, was meant to illustrate a theme of, for example, things are not what they appear, don't be too hasty to make decisions— and the following scenes carried that out, there might be a potential thematic line to the Declaration Preamble Reveal (DPR for short).. Instead we get three scripts in one, presented as a sort of boxes in boxes shell game leading to a pay off that comes from nowhere...

I realize I've just less elegantly stated what's been stated elsewhere (an good call, John B MD, on Ebert. he's quite good at phrasing these things. You must be on his site a lot today!)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 12:02pm

@John BMD: agreed on the Ebert quote and on Tracey v. Kirk. On the latter, one of the episodes few strengths is that we do see Kirk come up against another starship captain, who is a worthy antagonist. In this and other respects, "Bread and Circuses" makes for a useful contrast!

On the former, this is one of the reasons why I think BSG worked so well, at least up to near the end (i am not seeking to start a BSG season 4 discussion here!): whereas a good Star Trek episode will follow this principle for an episode, BSG followed it for the series. If you could accept FTL drives, a solar system with 12 human colonies who came from Kobol, not earth, and genocidal sexbots, you were set. They didn't make you accept some new sci-fi conceit every week, like TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 12:43pm

This reminds me of a memo I saw reproduced on the internet a while back  
<http://jonrowe.blogspot.com...>

where Robert Reed of the Brady Bunch explains to the producers how he can't deal with them changing mid-episode between "comedy", "farce", and "slapstick." He makes some valid points, but I

think it's also hilarious for its juxtaposition of a very serious letter with the comical Mike Brady. It's like it's commenting on itself in some weird way.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 1:00pm

Indeed, Mr. Reed makes some valid points!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 1:38pm

But let's be fair: good writers and good actors (by which I mean to imply nothing about Rex Reed nor The Brady Bunch) can indeed maneuver between these different styles, even within the confines of a single episode, without the whole seeming strained /to the audience/.

Take almost any episode of The Simpsons, for example. Or if cartoons are cheating, shows like Newsradio, Night Court or Three's Company employ both slapstick and witty dialogue, often within the same script or even the same scene. While a Shakespearean purist like Reed might balk at the idea of acting in a Bat-M\*A\*S\*Hup, writers today might find that concept to be an intriguing springboard for a story. To be sure — poorly written, it would be a disaster. But isn't that true of any script?

So back to "Omega Glory." Yes, the structure is a bit looser than a generic dramatic script, but on the other hand the head-fakes also keep a seasoned viewer guessing. Mystery plague that McCoy has to fight? Oh wait, I've seen this one, it was called "Naked Time" (or "Miri", or "The Deadly Years", etc.). Federation personnel go rogue and violate the Prime Directive? Oh yeah, like in "Patterns of Force" or "Bread and Circuses."

In "Omega Glory", things move along so swiftly that a viewer stays engrossed in the plot. And from where I sit, that's what good TV has to do, more than staying consistently in one theme or motif. There are quite a few Trek scripts like "Court Martial" or "The Conscience of the King", which have (IMO) twenty minutes of plot material stretched out over an hour of running time — leading to a lot of foot-dragging before the big reveal. Despite the wince-inducing ending, I'd rather be kept guessing by "Glory" than dawdle along while heartbeats are being isolated in "Court Martial."

I guess it really does take different strokes to move the world...

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 2:01pm

@Ajax: It is true that a talented writing staff could pull off, say, a Batman-meets-M\*A\*S\*H storyline. And by talented writing staff, I mean "only Joss Whedon". However, shifting tone during the course of an episode is more perilous. I'm sure it can be done, but it probably shouldn't be done unless you really know what you're doing!

If you enjoy "The Omega Glory", I'm not going to even try to convince you not to enjoy it. Still, I wouldn't say that the structure is "loose", which implies a certain dashing improvisation quality. I would say instead that the structure is cheap hackery. The fact that the various "head-fakes" (or cheap distractions) are recycled from other Trek episodes might indeed keep the seasoned viewer guessing, but also show a certain lack of imagination.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 4:12pm

It would make the episode an order of magnitude more plausible (which is still not saying much), but no more enjoyable, nor would it solve the structural problems identified above.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 7:14pm

Good criticism and arguments presented in the thread(s) as to why Omega is terrible, but I'll also still defend it as entertaining. Jumps the shark two-thirds of the way in - in a BIG way - but somehow not enough for me to hate it (and I'm a nit-picker when it comes to these things). A large part of this may be due to my previous unfamiliarity with this particular episode, and to the knowledge that we've got some pretty stupid episodes coming down the pike. The justified accusations of plot-jumpcuts aside, I enjoyed most of it far more than I expected to. Actually, I think the plot "cheats" may be one of its strong features, as Ajax says.

However, I do feel compelled to point out that it's a lot easier to inject drama into a comedy show than comedy into a drama.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 8:55pm

@Cloud William: I believe we're just going to have to agree to disagree on most of this. However, for the joy of beating a dead horse, I will make a couple of points. First, the episode does not have "conflicting plot elements", it has red herrings. The virus is not dealt with, it is explained away when it is no longer necessary. Similarly, the fountain of youth is explained away when no longer useful.

Second, while I can't speak for everyone else, I don't really have a problem with unsubtle politico-social commentary. Bring on "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield"! But what IS the commentary here? Biological warfare is bad, because you may be reduced to savagery? Or biological warfare is good, because while some people will be reduced to slime molds, the survivors will live for centuries? The US Constitution is awesome, because... um... because it is? Don't let the Constitution become meaningless "holy words", because then you might... um... totally vanquish your enemies? Good unsubtle politico-social commentary is straightforward and unambiguous. "The Omega Glory" is confused and unfocused.

All that said, I can't really disagree with Meyer. It's entertaining enough despite the lazy, sloppy script and ridiculous story, though maybe I'm just a sucker for Star Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [i and i](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/08/09 2:41am

yeah, i++ haven't re++watched this one, but i++ remember loving it as a teen (in re++runs). barbarian-looking stuff, fights, then kirk wins them over with his mind/memory, he's like some kind of holy man to those dudes. the constitution or the pledge of allegiance, or whatever—they all just swoon! i++ was like—hey, i++ could have done that!

p.s. i++ won't do this (bruno-esque) bit again. i++ just had to support this episode and got carried away.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/08/09 4:24pm

"...maybe I'm just a sucker for Star Trek."

Alurin brings up another good question. Does the original Trek really hold up 40+ years later? I grew up watching it, loved it, and wonder if I'm forgiving many examples of bad writing/acting/etc. because of that fact. Haven't heard much from folks who may be watching the entire series for the first time. I'll bet that most folks, if they watched just "The Cage" or "City on the Edge of Forever", would agree that they were pretty good. But if I had no idea what the show was like and saw Abraham Lincoln appear sitting in a big chair in the middle of space, I doubt I would give the series much of a chance.

Richelieu - weren't you going to try to hook your girlfriend on the show? How's that going?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

8/10/09 9:57am

Glad you asked! I'm having trouble coming up with French-subtitled copies, and have come across some doubled in French, but in Canadian French, which as you may know, sounds hilarious to French people. So, while I'm dying to show her 'City on the Edge of Forever' I'm afraid she'll laugh her ass off; Good results with Space Seed/Wrath of Khan and Balance of Terror; i watched the upgraded 'Doomsday Machine' last night and found it really exciting... that said, she quite likes 'Enterprise'. Though thoroughly (and disappointingly) hetero, she seems obsessed with T'Pol's tits. Whe keeps saying 'T'pol' in a sort of faux-chinese accent, and cupping her hands in front of her to represent boobs. Strange, but also strangely agreeable.... We're jsut back from vacation, so I've yet to put on the big push. i'll keep you informed!

@Cloud william:

1: No Ebert is not a God, nor is he the inventor of these thoughts. Te ideas are not hard and fast rules, either. But far and wide, across the centuries, they do work. Often when something fails, you can see it's because of these rules, though you'll never make anything worth seeing by slavishly copying them.

I would beinterestedin actual example of other (good) Trek episodes where you feel they changed story like this with no regard to theme or structure.

2: A story will always have different 'elements', but I'm not sure of your definition. You seem to be confusing 'plot' with 'theme' here as well, ie 'man against nature' is not a plot.

3: I quite agree that the flag-waving makes all of us a bit uncomfortable and is probably reason number one for the hating. I for one do not hate this episode, as I have said before, I find it quite entertaining, just kind of a mess. I am sure you are right about this and it's wy we all loved it so much more when we were 8. In this case, my friend, the fault lies not in out Star Trek, but in ourselves....

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster

8/10/09 11:34am

Richelieu, I don't mean to pry, but does your girlfriend really need to "represent" boobs, instead of simply "presenting"?

"In this case, my friend, the fault lies not in out Star Trek, but in ourselves..."

so true!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster

8/11/09 2:37pm

@Simonillyan - Glad to hear that you're relatively new to the series and enjoying. Are the episodes that threw you off generally in line with Zack's reviews, or are there certain episodes that made you think, "Zack and the comment boards are all completely off-base on this one"?

@Richelieu - I still say "The Cage" is probably the best place to start. Too bad they've neglected French subtitles. Good luck. Years ago I saw a comedy called "French Postcards" - about American college students studying in France - with a scene in which one of the students just sits around watching French-dubbed TOS episodes on TV. It was hilarious. How can you successfully dub a Shatquake?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/12/09 12:03am

Yeah, the French voices are pretty crap, even the 'French-French' ones. Part of the problem is TOS wasn't even shown in France until '84, so they thought it was kitsch from the get go and did a sloppy job of it. No idea if they've gotten their act together for the new DVDs. They're doing much, much better in general. I just saw 'La-haut' (UP, the PIXAR flick) in French and it was dubbed really well....

You can say a lot of bad stuff about 'Friends' but the first French voices were so bad, and the series was so popular here, that it actually got people listening to series in VO (Original Version, therefore, usually English) Today almost every series exists in a format where you can choose the language. The character in French Postcards would have an easier time of it now...

I remember 'French Postcard' it was on Showtime or HBO back in the day a lot, and I kept watching hoping to catch a glimpse of boobies.. On which subject:

My girl's got the boobies, Alurin; Not on T'Pol's scale, but quite well equipped, thank you.

In fact, she has explained her 'archer to T'Pol' parroting: Apparently it is meant to signal a breakdown in communication between us. Apparently that is true on more levels than one.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/12/09 10:38am

Of course, it's a lot easier to dub a cartoon than a live-action film, since you don't have to get the timing as precise.

I can't remember the last time I saw a movie dubbed into English. Usually we get either subtitles or someone thoughtfully remakes the entire film.

Glad to know you're not being boob-deprived, RJ! (not that there's anything wrong with flat-chested French women!)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [SpindleFiend](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:34am

Right on the money

"While this is actually a terrible, terrible episode, there's something wonderful in finding out for yourself just how bad it gets."

HAH! Exactly. That's also how I felt about "Spock's Brain."

Hey, speaking of things that are terrible, an open question for the peanut gallery: I have always avoided watching ST V because you always hear, you know, how much it sucks. But I recently found out that Shatner does the DVD commentary. So, for any who have seen it, is the commentary entertaining enough to make this apparently universally-reviled stinkbomb worth watching?

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)SpindleFiend

8/06/09 11:17am

Holy crap a didn't even realize that director Shatner would have a commentary on it. Kirk boozily narrating that flop?!

Must... be... awesome

Please, we need a super team-up of the TV CLUB and COMMENTARY TRACKS OF THE DAMNED

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)SpindleFiend

8/06/09 11:27am

I've tried to reply to this twice now, and both times they've been lost. Apologies if all my comments show up again at once with harrowing tales of an alternate universe where the Earth is ruled by giant carrots.

I can't give a first hand account of the commentary, but the making-of clips are certainly Shatneriffic. There's one where he's talking about his motivations for the rock-climbing scene, and admits that's he's never climbed a mountain before himself. He still feels qualified to speak for all the mountain climbers of the world, though, and explains that he thinks they all pursue their sport so they "can hug the mountains, because they love them so much."

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)SpindleFiend

8/06/09 11:28am

But I would like to hear Shatner's commentary on Uhura's sexy fan dancing.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)SpindleFiend

8/06/09 11:32am

Star Trek V is dumb and stupid - not the MOST dumb and stupid Star Trek has been but pretty damned close. It has a couple of outstanding moments in it (McCoy discussing his father's death, Kirk screaming at Spock to shoot his brother), but there's an awful lot of tedious dreck to get through first. The mutual peaceful planet thats gone to dust just seems wildly implausible and dull, Spocks brother is about as anti-climatic as it's possible to imagine (it's not like we have never seen an emotional Vulcan before), the villan(s) has a plan so dumb even Kirk can see through it (the much-quoted "what does God want with a starship" speech), and the whole thing ends with an unexciting 'splosion in a sort of inexpensive Californian stonehenge. Plus, you know, Uhura's fan dance. There's some attempt to emphasise the cameraderie between Kirk, Spock and McCoy, but it comes off as a big smug and self-congratulatory (not least because McCoy is so neglected in the films) and is successful much more because of the actors than the writing.

But it's maybe worth seeing if you've watched a lot of other Star Trek, just to see what the non-full is about.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)SpindleFiend

8/06/09 11:49am

STV is probably not all that bad, you know, once. Its the horror of seeing it multiple times that really brings you down.

Also, I saw it in the theater and was so stoked and then, suck. A feeling I replayed pretty much for all of the TNG movies, and was so relieved not to have with JJ's film.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 11:50am

Shatner really understood the dynamic between Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, and I think those scenes all work. He seems a little unsure what to do with 'the rest,' though. I wouldn't call McCoy neglected in the films- he certainly gets ample screen time in Search for Spock and Undiscovered Country.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 12:01pm

Time, but not any development. Spock has the whole "dying and being brought back to life giving him a new perspective" thing, Kirk gets to confront his ageing, but McCoy? Nothing. The nearest we get is, ironically, in Star Trek V, where we get to explore his backstory with his father, but nothing ever comes of it - the character never seems to be changed by being forced to confront his feelings and memories, and by the end of the movie he's back to jokes around the campfire as if the whole thing never happened (to be fair, Kirk and Spock different by the end of this movie either).

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 12:09pm

I'd say ST III is a good step in his relationship with Spock, and I would say he changes over the course of that movie, though they may not follow through on it in subsequent entries. But then again, part of his character is that he's an old curmudgeon who's set in his ways, so maybe we shouldn't expect him to change.

Also, just because I want to say it:

"That green-blooded bastard! It's his revenge for all those arguments I won!"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 12:28pm

This is an interesting thread. I always felt Movie McCoy was playing a bit of a caricature. This didn't bother me in TMP, because you had to re-establish McCoy, and II and III were fine, but V and VI seemed way overplayed. I Love Spock! I Hate Spock! She's my sister and my daughter!

[Reply](#)

- [Backseat Boyfight](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 1:23pm

ST V is definitely worth seeing, but prepare not to be impressed. There are some nice bits about the characters and their relationships with each other, but the movie as a whole is not well paced and not terribly engaging. If you go in not expecting much, you'll be fine.

Also, I just rewatched JJAbrams Star Trek on an Imax screen. Shakey hand-cam footage + Imax = so visually abrasive! Also, that movie makes \*no\* goddamn sense. And I miss Jerry Goldsmith. So much. So very, very much.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 4:33pm

This is how Paramount fucked their biggest franchise and why it really shows in Star Trek 5: It looks like they spent 200 bucks on the whole film.

ST5 is just so depressing to watch after the awesome first 4 films. After a time travel(i.e. budget



saving) trip to modern day San Fran in ST4, you'd think we'd get some more sci fi action. I don't go to Trek movies to see them sitting around a campfire. On REAL rocks. Can't a fella get a few purple styrofoam callbacks?

Oh hey here's our ride fellas. Well actually, it's Walter Koenig in a tree shining a flashlight on us, then Nichelle Nichols emerging from the woods with the same light behind her, simulating the Shuttlecraft.

Because the transporters aren't working AGAIN(how many times have we heard that one?). It's like Scotty's the super in the shittiest building in NY with no working elevator, not Chief Engineer on the greatest ship in the fleet.

But, we just saved us a few FX shots.

Then, let's shoot the rescue of the diplomats at the old Sanford and Son set, cause we couldn't get the real junkyard across the street. Want really cool space bikes for a bass- ass action scene? How about some Taun-tauns or space lizards to ride in on for the assault?

Nah just kiddin guys, your getting horses. You can call them "Space horses" if you want. And we asked Shatner to bring his, so treat 'em nice.

That Enterprise look familiar? Sets are from TNG, they must have shot it at night after Picard and crew left.

ACTUAL DIALOG\* from later in the film:

Kirk: I ordered you to shoot, Spock!

Spock: I cannot.

Kirk: Why?!

Spock: That effect is not in the budget. This "Space rifle" is obviously 2 pipes glued together that were laying around the junkyard from yesterday's shoot. Also, Sybok is my brother.

And ON and ON. Thanks Paramount. I've heard excuses that all the good SFX men were working on Ghostbusters2, Indy 2, but come on they were just cheap and figured let's have lots of (cringe worthy)comedy and no one will notice that any TOS episode had a bigger budget.

\* not really.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 6:07pm

Well played, sir. Well played.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 6:33pm

Very nicely done, Pizza. But I will always have anger issues at ST V because since I saw that movie in the theaters I've wanted a machine that dispenses marshmallows. We can crack the human genome, but no marshmallow replicator?! We're living in the dark ages.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 8:37pm

Actually, space horses would have made that movie a lot better.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)SpindleFiend  
8/06/09 10:29pm

I recently rewatched the film after finding it for 2 euros at the local flea market. I had hated, hated, HATED it when i came out, it even made me ashamed to love Trek. Even so, I had often quoted it to haters with it's nearly Pinter/Mamet-esque semi-profundity...



(from memory, which I am sure is not exact:)

'You would kill me, a man you do not know, for field of empty holes?'

'It is all I have!'

Beat that, Beckett!!

Actually, I was 'somewhat) less sickened by the campfire 'row, row your boat' crap. 'That's one of my favourites! how does it go again?')

Shooting god in the eye because he needed a ship seemed a bit small-minded and petty to me then as now. Who are we to judge God just because he needs bus fare? I thought we were beyond that in the 23rd century....

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)SpindleFiend

8/07/09 1:25am

@Hanley: I listened to the commentary tracks for II, III, and IV, and I agree: they are pretty good. No - pretty damn good.

While I really do appreciate the interesting turn this thread has taken re: the various development of characters, I have to ask. Has anyone actually listened to the Shatner commentary? I only know of its existence because at the end of the commentary for ST IV (Shatner and Nimoy, not as good as you'd think) they mention it. Is it worth listening to? A myth? Bueller?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)SpindleFiend

8/07/09 9:43am

I might watch V, if only for the audio commentary. But only via netflix. it's not worth buying, even if it's in the \$5 bin at wal-mart. And it's not worth renting, even for \$.99/night. This was the first ST movie I saw as a kid, and even then I had the sense of being ripped off. I mean, a sci-fi movie that features not one, but two scenes of grown men sitting around a camp fire singing songs? as has been mentioned above, it's bad, but not in a fun way. It's closer to bad in a Battlefield Earth way - If you can remain awake through the whole thing I commend you.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)SpindleFiend

8/07/09 10:11am

I haven't head it but again it must be Shattastic (thank you JBMD from the other thread). I really hope Zack does the movies after season 3.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)SpindleFiend

8/07/09 10:46am

Richelieu-

I suspect you have seen this before:

<http://rogerebert.suntimes...>

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)SpindleFiend

8/07/09 10:57am

@John Barleycorn:

Maybe.. You did mean to send me to a review of 'North', right?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)SpindleFiend  
8/07/09 10:58am

OK? I get it, the 'hated, hated..' bit...

No that was right from the heart!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)SpindleFiend  
8/07/09 1:02pm

This is indeed interesting, but not interesting enough to make me watch Star Trek V again. You're still going to have to throw in a couple bottles of Lagavulin and a three-way with Zoe Saldana and Grace Park.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)SpindleFiend  
8/07/09 9:44pm

I heartily recommend watching the film with RiffTrax. My favorite moment, after Scotty says you need the right tool for the right job, "He is so drunk."

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)SpindleFiend  
8/20/09 12:19pm

Thanks, Nebusj and Eponymous. I think maybe I'll skip watching the unadulterated version, as it were, and skip straight to the commentary and then the RiffTrax. Of course, per Pizza Monster, I am crossing my fingers for a Commentary Tracks of the Damned.

[Reply](#)

- Hide replies
- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 8:35pm

Ultimate Computer

Not too much talk about "Ultimate Computer" so far?

Good middle-of-the-road episode, as Zack says. But it seems to me the core of the story is Kirk's questioning of himself and his pride - how maybe it's not his love for the ship so much as it is the glory of commanding it. The Shatnerizing makes it a bit harder to buy, but it's still a character-driven story (along with the fun battle stuff).

I didn't see the Dunsel comment as a put-down. Instead, I read it as a recognition between all these Starfleet guys that their days may be numbered. A computer ship that carries enough redshirts to change the oil regularly and who maybe won't get killed as often. No captains or other decision-makers need apply. In this case, the term "gunboat diplomacy" becomes literal.

And in the still mostly punch-card era the show came out of, it's an interesting example of a cautionary tale. "Dr. Strangelove" was a hit only three or four years before this episode (and, yep, you could read Cold War fears into it if you wanted to) and "2001: A Space Odyssey" wouldn't show up for another year or so. Plus, you get a textbook demonstration of the application of Asimov's Robotic Laws. Yeah, we've seen it all before, but "Dr. Strangelove" still holds up, and so does "Ultimate Computer".

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)meyer

8/06/09 8:54pm

Yeah, I always liked this episode. It's pretty good for a bottle show. And a lot of it is actually about Kirk and his feelings. Whoa whoa whoa feelings.

Plus you get to call people "Captain Dunsel"!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)meyer

8/06/09 9:55pm

I remember this as a good episode. Haven't seen it in many years

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)meyer

8/06/09 9:57pm

I remember this as a good episode. Haven't seen it in many years, so when Zack says it's flat, I guess I have to defer. But I always liked.

Plus I love it when Kirk logs a computer into committing suicide.

This. Unit. Must.  
die

"Has there every been a sci-fi story in the history of anything where giving a computer complete control didn't end in the computer going psycho?"

The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress, by Heinlein.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer

8/07/09 12:02am

For whatever reason (and I do still like it) this episode is one of the ones that sticks with me the most...

Though I do have a (possibly racist?) confusion wiht this scientist with Dr MBenga... forgive me, I was 7 when I saw it...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)meyer

8/07/09 7:25am

The difference is simple Richeilu: Doctor M'Benga is a briefly seen character who specialised in Vulcan medicine, and who went on to become a fan favourite in the line of spin-off novels. The other one is Blackula.

I suspect there's not much discussion about The Ultimate Computer because it's fine but essentially harmless. Arrives, does what it does, buggers off again. Nobody is outstanding, nobody is really dreadful, the world carries on turning. Although we've seen all-powerful computers enough in Season 1 and 2 already to not be really impressed when this one arrives, it's not the worst all-powerful computer (probably Vaal wins that award), neither is it the best (Landau?).

[Reply](#)

- [Ian Orr](#)meyer

8/07/09 9:40am

The thing that I found weird after seeing this episode again after having watched all the modern incarnations of Star Trek is that Dr Daystrom has a scientific institute named after him in the time of

Next Generation, which to my mind is like having an engineering institute named after the guy who designed the Ford Pinto.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer

8/07/09 10:49am

Martin Landau was a computer?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)meyer

8/07/09 10:52am

@Ian Orr: Daystrom was already famous for inventing the duotronic computer. As long as you have one fantastic success, you can follow it with duds.

besides, I'd like to see A Ford Pinto take out four Federation battleships!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer

8/07/09 10:57am

Two things:

1) Didn't M'Benga and Daystrom pretty much have both the same haircut and the same jumpsuit? This, on top of their, ahem, tan, might reasonably cause confusion amongst twenty year old memories.

2) Agree with meyer on the Dunsel bit. I didn't see it as being Dickish to Kirk, if he wanted to be Dickish on an open comm link he would have said something that Kirk didn't need to translate for the bridge crew. It would have been one thing if, say, Daystrom had said it, but I think the other Captain (Commodore Wesley? I forget) was commiserating more than sticking it to Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)meyer

8/07/09 11:03am

It didn't need to be translated for the Bridge crew. Everyone understood it perfectly, except McCoy.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)meyer

8/07/09 11:05am

I too confess to misidentifying William Marshall in this episode until I watched it again recently — I'd always thought it was Brock Peters, another Trek MVP who plays a Starfleet admiral in a couple of the TOS movies and later goes on to become Captain Sisko's dad in DS9.

TOS has a funny sort of relationship with its multi-culti ethos. For every episode featuring racial/ethnic minorities with respectable roles ("That Which Survives" is a fine example, with both Dr. M'Benga and ersatz Indian helmswoman Lt. Radha, as well as Sulu and Chekov, getting significant numbers of lines) you have one like "By Any Other Name", which features a black guy getting killed before the opening credits without even receiving a line, and whose idea of diversity is having both Irish AND Italian-sounding names on the crew.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer

8/07/09 11:21am

Ajax-

Actually, until yesterday I too thought Daystrom was Brock Peters. Again with the haircut, but I really think the two actors have a bit of the same cadence and baritone.

Brock Peters played Darth Vader in NPR's Star Wars radio play and his James Earl Jones impression sounds pretty much like Brock Peters trying to make his voice go deeper.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer  
8/07/09 11:22am

Jim-

I duly stand corrected.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)meyer  
8/07/09 12:17pm

@Ajax: I bet that the definition of "diversity" in TOS depends on the individual episode writers.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Jimmy James](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:25am

Crazy Fuckin' Tracey

I think it also might bear mentioning that Captain Tracey previously appeared as the crazy-as-a shithouse-rat Dr. Simon Van Gelder in 'The Dagger of the Mind.'

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Jimmy James  
8/06/09 11:12am

Good catch man. Yeah he's the go-to crazy guy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Jimmy James  
8/06/09 11:52am

And I have to admit that, back in the day, Tracey's monologue on the big fight scene really worked well for me. He talked about expending 20 phaser packs or something, but "they kept coming". It created a great visual, and I was surprise Zack noted it with some distain.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Jimmy James  
8/06/09 5:52pm

and he was the great silent villain of Cool Hand Luke.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Jimmy James  
8/06/09 10:18pm

great actor, but I am absolutely opposed to this 'He's great, let's use him again' thing in series. it traumatized me with Gordon on Sesame Street and reoccurred notably on Hill Street Blues, NYPD Blue and Deadwood.. Milch much, anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Jimmy James  
8/07/09 1:35am

i'm pretty sure every series has done it at some point.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#) Jimmy James  
8/07/09 9:01am

With Star Trek (though not so much in the case of Morgan Woodward) you can get away with it, since often one or more of the characters is an alien hidden under layers of make-up. Yes, Jeffrey Combs had like six roles on Deep Space Nine, but it doesn't get distracting.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Jimmy James  
8/07/09 10:59am

Jeffrey Combs is on Enterprise too.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Jimmy James  
8/07/09 3:02pm

That Rock episode was about as bad as the Critic/Simpsons cartoon crossover. Especially because the Rock did his stupid Rock pose. I felt used, and I feel kinda dirty right now thinking about it.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#) Jimmy James  
8/07/09 4:59pm

Jeffrey Combs should be in everything.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#) Jimmy James  
8/07/09 7:25pm

They need to get started on sending Combs the script for "The Return of the Curse of the Re-Animator's Ghost" right away. And he gives possibly the best performance of anyone in the cast of "Enterprise" (I'm not slamming "Enterprise" by saying that).

Reusing actors doesn't bother me in Trek too much, although it did in the X-Files Universe. Plus, it means more Barbara Babcock.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Jimmy James  
8/11/09 11:54pm

It...

'had the Rock beating on Seven of Nine'...

That phrase is so bizarre I just had to take it out of context and wonder what some non-English speaker, non Trek fan, would make of it... Sounds like a primitive music cue, or something.. Any other ideas?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:44am

The best of times, the blurst of times

I tried posting this earlier, so I apologize if it doubles:

I previously and repeatedly have been on record as being against the parallel development episodes (a la Roman Planet) in favor of Fed contamination episodes (a la Gangster Planet). I renew, and incorporate by reference, those comments.

However, I challenge all of you Hipsters to find me in the entirety of the ST canon anything that approaches the Full Shat, Shattastic, Shatneriffic monologue to the Yangs at the end: "THEY'RE... NOT...JUST... WORDS..."

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 4:39pm

Yeah that was a pretty massive Shatquake. I watched just that part a few times in awe.  
He may only only top it once, but he does it every episode: The opening credits.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 7:36pm

He chews the scenery big time in "Ultimate Computer" too!

"Bones, am I really that petty? Am I obsessed with the pride in being the captain of a starship?" [the whole audience nods in unison: umm...yeah]

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 10:51pm

It almost shames me that it takes a Canuck like Shatner to deliver such an all-out awesome reading of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Preamble.

But then I realize there is no shame in being out-awesomed by the Shat. He is a god among men.

[Reply](#)

- [Squirrels](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/11/09 6:37pm

I'm late on this, but my new absolute favorite Shatquake was at the convention last weekend. This happened in response to a question about the new movie:

(points at Nimoy) "I... have been inviting him on projects EVERY YEAR, and HE... ALWAYS says NO. But JJ Abrams calls and it's (girlie voice) 'Oh Mr. Nimoy... !'"

(jumps out of chair and starts skipping down the stage) "Yes, JJ, of course!"

(starts running up and down the stage and pointing at Nimoy) "WHORE! YOU WHORE"

(Nimoy slowly shakes head)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/12/09 12:27am

Squirrels, please tell me that did not happen.

(Horta slowly shakes head in disbelief at the shadow of a once great childhood hero.)

[Reply](#)

- [Squirrels](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/12/09 3:16pm

Sorry Pizza, it happened. But despite how pathetic/psychotic it might sound here, it was actually pretty funny (and did get a huge laugh). Nimoy and Shatner had a great rapport at the convention and they both seemed pretty relaxed and amused throughout.

I wish there was a clip on YouTube, but we were repeatedly admonished not to post any video and it seems like that's been heeded.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/12/09 4:44pm

Man..... just..... Damn.

The year and a half leading up to the new Trek has been Shatner whining, griping, "No one called me." In interviews, soundbites, and even open video clips to JJ Abrams. Total public embarrassment. Apparently he was offered a cameo but, being Shatner, he wanted to take over half the movie. Having the always class-act Nimoy (and only Nimoy) was a perfect pass of the torch. That's IT with the original cast I hope. Let's move forward.

Nimoy (and Doohan and Kelly) had guested on TNG and Spiner had no prob going on Enterprise. Frakes, Burton, Sirtis (and Schultz) were on Voyager and Enterprise. Mulgrew in Nemesis. This is the Family Business for these actors and they're more than happy to help I'm sure, it keeps them at the conventions, helps the franchise, and I'm sure the money's good.

I heard Shatner was begged by the Enterprise tv show to come on for a 2 or 3 parter and help them boost ratings in season 2, when they were fighting cancellation, but he was too big for them. Say what you want about Enterprise but I say it's a shame there's no Trek on air for the first time in years. I'd rather Have a (well made (sorry Singer)) Superman movie in the theatres but I'll take Smallville till that happens(which is a fine show).

So tough shit Shatner stop whining. Does anyone want a 300 lb. Kirk with puffy alkie eyes anyways?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:13pm

Music

The only new music composed for either of these episodes was for the Omega Glory flag scenes. Fred Steiner did this: sort of the Star Spangled Banner mixed with with the Enterprise Fanfare, with snare drums. Recorded in the same session where they recorded the music for By Any Other Name.

Despite the fact that there's (practically) no original music, I find Omega Glory's soundtrack completely fascinating. Almost bizarre.

In the Jeff Bond book there are two interviews with Fred Steiner. One of them is taken from an earlier source, 1977. In that interview, Steiner says:

"Of course I think that a score is always going to be more successful if it can be done by one composer, and not mixed in with the music of five or six. I feel that these track jobs tend to have too much music; that is because the editor, rightly or wrongly, feels that it's his duty to put in as much music as possible prior to dubbin, because it's very easy to eliminate it at the dubbing seasions rather than to add something. So most of them tend to overload the film with music for that reason. Generally speaking, since they do it so carefully and so skillfully, it works, and in the dubbing session the producer tends to leave it in. So I feel that some episodes have too much music."

With that notion of "too much music" in mind, it's interesting to watch this episode. This thing is tracked within an inch of its life. It's got music from all over the place, practically every episode it could — even some from season 1, which I thought was against the rules. Perhaps it was library music.

I'll post some examples in thread.



[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)JimZipCode  
8/07/09 10:40am

I actually think the "Trek Spangled Banner" fanfare weakens that scene considerably, and helps take you well beyond the Cheese Event Horizon. Admittedly I think that's probably a '00s aesthetic judgement on my part, and a '60s audience would be puzzled if something like it /weren't/ there, but I can only be a creature of my own time in this case.

(Compare to the 6th-season TNG episode "Lessons," where Picard, trying to relearn his Ressikan flute from "The Inner Light", plays "Frere Jacques" in a duet with his love interest. As the two of them put down their instruments and embrace, the score picks up the simple theme and it adds considerable warmth to an already touching scene.)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
8/10/09 9:23am

Hey, let's have with the examples!  
I'm really interested when you post this sort of stuff!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
8/10/09 2:28pm

Ok, so for example the teaser:

The intro is a flyby from the Doomsday Machine, I think it's the one played on the return from commercial after Decker is killed. (The original cue goes on a little after the fanfare, to Sulu discovering the power drain.)

Then into some "zaps" from the Charlie X score; even a zap as Sulu's Viewmaster deploys. Why do we need a dramatic sting there? Charlie X was a season one episode, so there shouldn't be any music from it in a season two episode. But several cues were re-arranged as library cues for use thruout the series, and the zaps were among them.  
(see pgs 54-5 of the Jeff Bond book)

Then a high-drama cue from the Corbomite Maneuver as Kirk says "magnification 3" and we see the Exeter. Another season 1 episode, and this is not listed as a library cue. However, I think Steiner may have re-used this in the Who Mourns For Adonais score, so it would qualify as season 2 music.

No music for most of the scenes on the Exeter, then the teaser closes with a high-drama blast that I've heard a thousand times, but can't place.

When I write it down like that, it doesn't look like that much. Most of the scenes on board the Exeter are silent. But the first couple mins, the scenes on the Enterprise, it seems like every second is crammed with music. Why is there a "sting" when Sulu's Viewmaster deploys? Why another one when we see the Exeter on screen? It's overdramatic.

It just seems to me an example of what Steiner was talking about, when he said that producers used too much music on tracked episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
8/11/09 12:20am

I put the rest in a blog post, it would be way too cumbersome to list in these comments.  
<http://jimzipcode.blogspot...>

Looking over the list, I think part of what struck me as bizarre about this track job, is (a) the sheer variety of episodes from which the music is drawn and (b) how much music there is from season 1. Some of what I perceived as "season 1" music is library cues. The rest is music where a theme appeared in a season 1 episode, and then the same composer did a season 2 episode and re-used or expanded his original theme. So technically it's season 2 music; my ear is fooling me.

Hopefully this is interesting.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
8/11/09 11:48pm

JimZC,

I, for one, find it very interesting. A couple of questions/observations: When you say that because the Charlie X stings are first season music and therefore shouldn't be used this season, why is that? Is it a legal/contractual thing, or just not standard practice? From a practical standpoint, I see no problem.

On the other hand, I went back and looked at the opening scenes and they do seem a bit filled to the brim... I happen to have a weakness for the whole music sting, chills run up the spine, thing, but it is true that when it's done too much it can become 'mickey mousing' (having the music illustrate what is going on exactly, ie, someone falls down and there's a glissando of stings followed by a thud on the drums, for those of you not into the music scoring thing too much)

I would say my biggest problem with this stuff here is one you briefly touched on in your last pot: it doesn't go along with the rest of the show. Here it's wall-to-wall music and after.. pretty spare, actually...

I also feel that Steiner identified the problem correctly in the passage you cite, but I would add one thing: When I (or another director, or producer, for that matter) sketch out a scene, maybe even as far back as writing it, I have certain music in my head. Often I insist that it be scratch track for editing, and in my callow youth, I even went so far as to play it on set to 'set the mood' like they did in the silent days. Later (and the final music is usually the very, very last thing, in my experience, with the possible exception of foley), suggestions are often made, by the composer, producer and editor, and these things have a tendency to accumulate, the thought being, you can always take it away at the almost minute, but adding something at that time is extremely difficult (kind of the reverse of the 'You can always put more salt in the soup' trope)...

Then, inertia takes over. Time runs out (that's how you know you're done, right? Otherwise these things would go on forever), and all that stuff you meant to clean up later stays in... I honestly know people who've had rights problems because the scratch track made it into the final mix (obviously we're not talking huge Hollywood stuff here, but it wouldn't surprise me if that happened to those guys, either...)

What think you of my little theory (besides it being long-winded and strangely self-congratulatory?)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Scurrilous Lies Abound](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 2:12pm

I saw this maybe a month ago  
and recalled, while watching, this very article right here.

and yet, here it is again, so now I'm really, really confused! Did I dream read a T.V. Club article that told me information about an episode I had never seen before (down to the "worships the flag and reads from the declaration" bit), or did I accidentally time travel?

This is kind of creeping me out here.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/06/09 2:25pm

It got a write-up in our Star Trek inventory a couple months ago:  
<http://zodiac.avclub.com/ar...>

[Reply](#)

- [Scurrilous Lies Abound](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/06/09 2:26pm

Oh thank God. I thought I'd found myself detached from the space-time continuum. dodged a bullet there!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/06/09 9:50pm

[zodiac.avclub.com](http://zodiac.avclub.com)?What is the Star Trek inventory? What is

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/06/09 10:33pm

It's the wrong link. Here:  
<http://www.avclub.com/artic...>

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/07/09 9:37am

I think the existence of this server is a big point in favor of the "ZMF is actually an AV Club staffer" conspiracy theory.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/07/09 11:54am

Incorrect. I think it's a big point in favor of the "ZMF is actually a computer" conspiracy theory. A computer that can only type in caps.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Scurrilous Lies Abound  
8/10/09 9:28am

CAPLOCK IS A MOTHERFUCKER!!!! THAT IS ALL!!!!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:12am

First time Kirk lost a fight was to Tracey I think  
Hate to see that, even though he was a tough old bastard. Glad to see Kirk get 'im later.

Great write up again, missed it last week!!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 12:25pm

Pizza-

I think all the lost postings have prevented you from getting the recognition you deserve, so please die in a fire, etc.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 1:44pm

Finally! I was just thinking "Hey who you gotta blow to die in a fire around hear?"

Thanks JBMD.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 1:45pm

\* here!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/06/09 10:08pm

Hear, Here!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/07/09 12:12am

(not necessarily in that order...)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Loose Stool](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:41am

NINJA III: The Domination!

Wherein I learned that a ninja can only be killed by another ninja.

[Reply](#)

- [Cajun Clearwater](#)Loose Stool  
8/06/09 12:40pm

Surviving the Game, where I learned that Gary Busey can only be killed by Ice-T.

[Reply](#)

- [The Shredder](#)Loose Stool  
8/06/09 5:15pm

He was also killed in Point Break. Not by Ice T.

[Reply](#)

- [Cajun Clearwater](#)Loose Stool  
8/06/09 7:08pm

Also Latin Dragon, now that I think about it. WATCH THAT MOVIE.

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Guapo](#)Loose Stool  
8/08/09 3:04am

Gary Busey can also be killed by a Predator. But a Predator can be killed only by Danny Glover.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:49am

Comment Board Foulups are making George Angry!  
"This approaches the glory of "HOW'D IT GET BURNED?"

Again, my profound ignorance lies bare for all to see. Can someone help me out with this reference? (Unless it relates to BSG, which I just got on Blu-Ray and would appreciate not being SPOILED.)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 10:56am

SFW?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 11:45am

Oh, yes, Wicker Man. I saw that piece of crap in its entirety, and not long after viewing the originals which, in retrospect, probably didn't help Nic's cause.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/06/09 2:24pm

So \*that\*'s the infamous WICKER MAN, huh?

Well, that was...

See, what that was is it was...

...

Hm.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/07/09 10:49am

Steve McCrosky, Urban Daredevil.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/12/09 4:47am

Captain Kirk wants to amke love to the mountain...  
No joke folks, probably the best thing to come out of ST V:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watc...>

I'll try and post this again next time as it's so late in the game... If I forget, do it yourselves! This one is really good fun!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/12/09 4:46pm

Genius Rich' thanks

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/12/09 4:50pm

For your next party mix

<http://www.youtube.com/watc...>

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 8:49pm

Karl Lashley is smiling down from heaven

One of the things I like about "The Ultimate Computer" is that it's the only place outside of Scientology tracts and outdated psychology textbooks where you are likely to encounter the word "engram"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)alurin  
8/07/09 10:59am

Funny, everytime I hear that word I think of Graham Crackers and get a little hungry. Serious.

[Reply](#)

- [The Shredder](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 12:10pm

I can excuse all but LXG.

How could you do that Zack???

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)The Shredder  
8/07/09 11:50am

'Cuz of that scene at the end. The witch doctor mumbling over Connery's grave and the lightning strike ... it's like we're all being prepped for the Adventures of Zombie Alan Quatremain and there's no way that can't be awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/06/09 10:13pm

Johnny Henry

Methinks you mean 'JOHN HENRY' my friend!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/07/09 7:27am

What, from that Terminator TV show?

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen  
3/03/14 8:39am

The Omega Glory might have made slightly more sense if it had been suggested that Cpt. Tracey brought the American flag and constitution down to the planet with him. Otherwise, how and when did they get those things? They were supposed to have made that flag and written their constitution themselves... which just happens to look exactly like ours??

[Reply](#)

- [AutomaticJack](#)Zack Handlen

8/06/09 8:37pm

The Irony Is

that you'll be reviewing the Roman Planet episode next time, Zack... which also has the bizarre "parallel Earth". No explanation.

And I believe the episode where you have the adults all killed off by a virus is again supposed to be another Earth.

[Reply](#)

- [permazorch](#)Zack Handlen

8/06/09 10:50am

Did McCoy also say,

"I've found evil triumphs over good unless good is very lucky."

Did I just imagine that? I've been thinking about it all morning, and here I read this new entry. Coincidence?! I think not!

[Reply](#)

- [Just Nut Up and Die Alone](#)Zack Handlen

3/09/16 10:49am

Oh my god

I was wrong

It was earth

All along!

I can't be the only one who had that in their head for the last 15 minutes of the episode ...

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen

7/08/16 11:22pm

As promised, my son's favorite line from The Wicker Man is quoted.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek*: "Bread and Circuses" / "Assignment: Earth"**

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published August 13, 2009

[Comments \(103\)](#)



If the first season of *Trek* was the Age of the Godlike Being, the second season has been all about the Prime Directive; what it means, what it demands, and what it costs when someone breaks it. It's a fascinating thematic direction for an adventure show to take, advocating detachment and observation over interference, and even though each episode that mentions the PD tends to provide enough narrative loopholes for Kirk to get involved without upsetting the rules, the core concept is never diluted. In fact, by the end of the season, we're fully convinced that the crew of the *Enterprise* would rather die than violate the PD, and that means something.

That doesn't stop "Bread and Circuses" from being frustratingly repetitive, though. Once again we've got a planet "suspiciously like Earth" (the number of times Spock reminds us of this fact is bizarre; it seems to suggest something, especially given the stinger at the end of the episode, but that meaning never really becomes clear), with a pre-space travel society. And once again, a space ship captain has beamed down among the locals and becomes involved in things that were better off avoided, in a culture that mimics a familiar one from Earth's history. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy get caught up in things, and have to decide just how much interference is justified when it comes to saving their own necks.

The *Enterprise* comes across the remains of the missing *S.S. Beagle* (Nooo! Not Space Darwin!) floating around in the vacuum, and then follow its path of trajectory back to Planet 4 of star system 892. (So I guess the naming committee was working off a vodka-and-more-vodka hangover that day.) While orbiting around the planet, Uhura manages to pick up some video transmissions, and the news isn't good. The government is rounding up "dissidents," always a bad sign, and there appears to be some sort of televised, life-or-death gladiatorial fighting going on. Even worse, the man the bridge crew sees killed during the combat happens to be a guy whose name pops on the crew list for the *Beagle*. So they probably didn't blow up their ship because they were really happy about everything.

The prospect of arena-style fighting doesn't really appeal to me, and things got less interesting after our heroes hit planet-side. They meet up with some escaped slaves (and it's weird here how, despite their heated discussion about the importance of Directivo El Uno, Kirk and the others didn't bother to find local garb before they beamed down), and find out that, shockingly, the former captain of the *Beagle*, R.M. Merik, has transformed himself into First Citizen Merikus.



It's "Omega Glory" all over again, only this time, instead of the Yangs and the Kohms, it's the evil Romans beating up on the hapless, well, we'll get to that in second.

So, we've got a teleplay that doesn't seem to have been written as much as paint-by-numbered into existence. Kirk is determined to have a chat with "Merikus," so the escaped slave Flavius leads them into town. Before they get captured, Flavius talks about how he used to be a gladiator himself, but then he heard of the religion that come down from "the sun," preaching peace and brotherhood, and could no longer bear to take up arms against another man. Remember that "sun" business, as it's going to be important by the end. Kirk gets captured, and eventually Merik comes into the picture; Kirk knew him back at the academy, but the guy washed out in his fifth year. The particulars may be different, but none of this is exactly fresh at this point.

Lots of shows have familiar patterns, but there's a difference between repeated structures and crutches. Part of the appeal of *Trek* is that it's potential for storytelling should be nearly limitless; you've got a star ship, you've got universes to explore, so why keep butting your head against the outhouse door? There are budget restrictions, of course, but while I can understand wanting to re-use old costumes and sets, that doesn't mean I want carbon copies of the same tired plots, with "Chicago" scrubbed out and "Roman times" swapped in.

Thankfully, "Bread" picks up momentum as it goes, and while it's never exactly great, it was better than I was expecting by the halfway mark. For one thing, we get the implausible-but-clever idea that the Roman trappings we see exist simultaneously with technology that's evolved far enough along to have something like television to support it. The best moment in the episode comes when Merik, and his evil Proconsul Claidus Marcus, show Kirk into the area where the fighting is held. Instead of an arena full of spectators, it's just a TV studio, with cameras and a cheap set, and an audience made up entirely of sound effects run through stereo equipment. Even better, when Flavius starts acting up later in the ep, the guards warn him if the ratings drop, they'll give him his own "special." It's a funny bit of satire, and the episode could've used more of that.

The in-studio fighting is "Bread"'s strongest stuff, but there's also some good Spock/McCoy interplay. As Kirk points out, not even Spock and McCoy themselves probably know for sure if they're friends or enemies, and that the series has managed to keep that balance throughout is terrific; the conversation the two of them have in the jail cell after Spock saves McCoy's life is melodramatic, to be sure, but it also plays true, and manages to give insights into both characters without getting maudlin.

For once, the Roman culture isn't the result of, say, Merik leaving a copy of *I, Claudius* lying around, but instead a natural development; which is as ridiculous as the whole Constitution nonsense from "Omega," but it is nice to find a race that can more than take care of itself in the face of Federation personnel. In fact, Merik was actually doing his best to keep a low profile when he arrived on the planet. It was Claudius Marcus who sought him out, Marcus who realized what was happening, and Marcus who decided it wasn't in the best interests of his society for word to get around about a bunch of slave-holding, fight-to-the-deathing Romans with their own planet. He had Merik bring his crew down, and anyone who objected got forced into the games—and died. Now Marcus proposes to do the same for the *Enterprise*, and in order to convince Kirk to order his men to start transporting, he puts Spock and McCoy's at risk.

Too much of "Bread" has a going through the motions feel, from the desultory hot chick that Kirk sort of seduces, to the threat that never seems all that threatening. The Roman society is never as expansive as it should be; all we get are some interiors with columns and stock footage of actual Rome. Obviously we couldn't have gotten *Ben Hur*, but this is too much of a hodge-podge of good and bad ideas. While the familiar plot-line manages to hold things together to a certain extent, it also stops the episode from breaking past its limitations. If this hadn't needed to follow the arc we've already seen too many times, if it had done more with the television angle... well, there's no way of telling if it'd been good, but it it least might've been more interesting.

The ending is curious, though. To the good, once Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam back to the *Enterprise* (with Merik dead by Marcus's hand back on the planet), the story basically ends. Since Merik wasn't responsible for any changes on 4, there's no reason for Kirk to meddle. That leaves the escaped slaves to fend for themselves, and while narrative that may seem abrupt, it's satisfying to leave behind a culture that *wasn't* improved by Starfleet. And then there's the whole

"sun" thing. Turns out it was mistranslated, and the ex-slaves aren't worshipping the sun. They're worshipping The Son, as in Of God, which is a development that is at once astonishing in its scope, and blinkered in its imagination. Nobody on the bridge even seems surprised that they've stumbled across the birth pains of a new Christianity, and there's something more than a little upsetting in that. The idea that out of all those universes, all that potential for life, that so many planets are basically just going through the same routine as Earth civilization... Isn't that horribly suffocating? And isn't it exactly the opposite of what *Trek* should really be about?

I'm still not completely sure if I'd seen Season Two before I sat down to review it (I definitely haven't seen anything from Season 3 in years), but I'd definitely seen "Assignment: Earth" before, and I wasn't looking forward to seeing it again. "Earth" was made by Roddenberry as a potential pilot for a new series, and the thumbmarks of compromise cover this piece of crap from top to bottom. It's hackneyed, with an unforgivably draggy climax, and worst of all, it's not even really a *Star Trek* episode. Kirk and Spock and the rest are reduced to cameos on their own show.

The *Enterprise* has gone back in time to observe the Earth of 1968, an apparently pivotal year in the history of the world. Already things are stupid; given that the last time the *Enterprise* ended up in Earth's past, they spent a whole episode trying to cover their tracks and not ruin everything, the idea of going back again just to take some notes is absurd. What possible historical information can be gleaned that's worth the potential invalidation of all known life? Time travel is a concept that only works in small doses. The more often it's used, the easier it is to notice the holes, and to use it here, simply so that our heroes can be around to help pimp Roddenberry's latest lame-brain idea, is weak as hell.

Before any of the crew can comment on how stupid it is to risk negating one's own birth simply for a chance to catch *Yellow Submarine* in theaters, the *Enterprise* accidentally intercepts a strange transporter beam. A man with a black cat materializes in the transporter room, and he's upset, because he was supposed to land on the planet; he has a very special job to do, and Kirk and the others are just getting in his way. There's a fight, the man (Gary Seven, played by Robert Lansing) proves himself impervious to Spock's neck pinches, and Kirk takes him down with a phaser stun. McCoy gives Seven a once over and finds he's a perfect physical specimen (despite looking like a 47 year-old with a history of cigarettes and coal mining), and Kirk gets ready to discuss what they should do next—an then Seven escapes and beams down to Earth.

I don't really want to spend a whole lot of time on this one. We never see Gary Seven again, and Roddenberry never got his new series off the ground; and even taken on its own terms, "Earth" is an occasionally campy but mostly just lousy bit of filler. At least we get some quality time with Teri Garr, the human secretary that Seven's predecessor's hired before dying in a convenient car crash. Her presence never makes any sense (why would a group of super-advanced human saviors need a daffy secretary, no matter what her IQ is?), but Garr is a pleasure to watch as always. She's just kind of sweet and friendly, and while I can't imagine wanting to tune in to her and Seven's adventures every week, I do feel kind of bad that the show wasn't picked up, for her sake. But hey, things turned out okay for her in the end, at least.

Oh, if you're curious: Gary is part of an elite task force that's been trained for generations by another, superior race (a race from a planet that's too mysterious for even the *Enterprise* to be aware of) to hang out on Earth and make sure everything goes smoothly. To help him, he's got an advanced computer with a bit of a sass mouth, and a cat named Isis who's briefly revealed to be a human at the end of the episode. His first mission is to sabotage the launch of an orbital nuclear platform that could lead to all kinds of ugliness—and he succeeds. Eventually. (What's weird is that when Kirk recounts some 1968 history, he talks about how the world was threatened by a whole bunch of these platforms floating around in space, offering instant death at the touch of the button. As far as I know, this is not a thing that happened. So did Gary prevent what Kirk was talking about? And if he did, why would he? I mean, Earth obviously survived the danger. And if he did change the future, wouldn't that risk the *Enterprise* crew as much as them accidentally destroying a plane might have?)

Maybe "Assignment: Earth" could've been a decent series; but it's terrible *Star Trek*. Once Gary hits the planet, Kirk and Spock follow in his footsteps from place to place, occasionally getting in his way but mostly just being superfluous. During the episode's climax, they're reduced to standing in some control room while other people accomplish things, and while Kirk is good at many things, passive observation is not one of them. Gary takes ages to unplug a few wires on

the platform, then gets beamed up to the *Enterprise* and then gets beamed back to his office by Teri Garr. Kirk and Spock follow soon after, and get to watch more as Gary uses the computer to watch some stock footage of rockets and then blow up the platform, "scaring" the US government into shutting down the program. (Of course, since that program was in response to a similiar Russian program... You know what? I don't care.)

The worst comes at the end. Kirk and Spock are paying Gary, Teri, and Isis one last visit. Spock's been checking out the computer files to see what's next for Seven (okay, I guess Gary's actions couldn't have changed the past after all, so apparently there was some kind of horrible orbital platform problem in the late sixties), and while he can't tell them exactly what's in store, he can say, "Captain, we could say that Mr. Seven and Miss Lincoln have some interesting experiences in store for them." Bad enough that we had to waste an hour being sold something that didn't exist to buy; even worse that *Trek's* wisest and best voice of reason has to take part in the shilling.

That does it for Season 2. Next week, we're going to take a look at two more *Trek* movies, *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* and *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, before starting into Season 3 the week after next. Be there!

#### Grades:

"Bread and Circuses": B-

"Assignment: Earth": D

#### Stray Observations:

- Mediocre as it generally is, there's a brilliant edit in "Bread" that had me laughing—McCoy and Spock are having a heated talk, and McCoy goes, "I know, I'm worried about Jim, too." And then we immediately cut to Kirk eating and drinking with a hot blond slave. Ah, the life.
- McCoy also gets a great insult in: "I'm trying to thank you, you pointy-eared hobgoblin!"
- I wonder if the words turned to ash in Nimoy's mouth when he delivered that line? He sells it well enough; and I do know he's got a certain IDIC medallion in his near future...
- Again: *Star Treks III* and *IV* next week, and then the week after that, Season 3, with "Spock's Brain" and "The Enterprise Incident."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (103)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 11:35am

Z, It's not "it's"  
It's "its"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 11:43am

Okay, I really appreciate the help, but—I spend about four hours working on something like this. Doesn't mean it's great, or worth much, but between watching the episodes and the writing, that's a bit of time put in. I edit these as best I can before I post 'em, but I'm the only one who sees it before it goes live, and I don't have time to look over it six or seven times to catch everything. So there are mistakes, and those mistakes are nearly always typos. If people want to point out the typos, I'll fix

them as fast I can, but just reminding me of a basic grammatical rule, without any context, isn't helpful, and is actually kind of frustrating. Thank you for wanting to help, though.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:02pm

Zack-

I also have found it a bit strange that this particular set of postings always involves more people doing spell/grammar check on you than any other. I, for one, think you're doing a great job, peanut gallery notwithstanding.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:03pm

Yikes, me culpa as they'd say in Rome. You'll no longer hear a peep out of me if I'm too oblique.

(I would've used the "find" function for easy searching, but that's just me. )

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:11pm

yes, I know, it's "mea."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:14pm

Tinsel hoisted on his own spellmatical petard! Oh justice!

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:19pm

Nah, jbmnd, there's a big diff between typos and grammatical mistakes. But I stand by my statement, no more panties will be bunched as a result of me.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:20pm

I think some of this might be Zack's own fault, because he was a good egg and used to always post right after and say "Got it, thanks!" or "Fixed now!"

What he should have said is, "Go Fuck yourself, Douchebag." That would have shut us up. Yes sir.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:32pm

I know that there are no such things as copy editors anymore, but the eye comes to a screeching halt when it comes across word that doesn't fit with the expected context, then the brain must stop and puzzle out just what's being intended. It interrupts the flow and pleasure of reading what is consistently a well-reasoned and entertainingly written analysis.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:33pm

OK I'm glad this is being addressed. Tinsel, your apology started out classy, but adding that you'll be quiet unless specific kinda negated it. An apology with conditions is not really an apology is it? I find nothing more infuriating than people pointing out mistakes like that. We know what he meant to write, we get it. It's the height of rudeness to correct people in front of others. A stranger corrected my pronunciation in a bar one time and he left within a minute, speechless and rightfully shamed when I was done with him. YOU DON'T DO THAT. Zack's peers and boss probably read this, ever think of that? You're not his copyeditor. And if you are in fact a copyeditor, do it at your job and not his.

You're doing a great job Zack, this is the write up on this site I never miss, keep it up boyo.

[Reply](#)

- [I Find Tinsel Distracting](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:40pm

and again, with the lack of an editing function, my posts are likewise confused.

then again, no one's paying me to be a writer, overworked or not.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 12:47pm

"then again, no one's paying me to be a writer, overworked or not."

Was that a slap at Zack? Are you for real?

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 2:50pm

I'm reminded of a Cosby Show episode where one of Bill's daughters gets her first job and she gets mad because they keep pointing out dumb mistakes she makes, like sending stuff to wrong addresses, and getting phone messages wrong. I remember her argument, "They never complement me on all the other stuff I do right!"

As an ordinary jack-off who just posts here out of boredom, I really can't expect to have everything perfect. But if I was a professional adding to this site, it would necessitate that the level of my contributions be much, much higher.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 3:21pm

Thank God I can rush past such glaring errors to enjoy the article as a whole. By rush past, I mean not give a shit about.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 5:53pm

Me Culpa. You Jane.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/13/09 11:56pm

Don't you mean Tholian shit?

Hey-o!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/14/09 9:35am

Confusing "it's" with "its" IS a typo—most of the time, people who make the mistake are aware of the distinction but are writing or typing too quickly to catch the error.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/14/09 5:00pm

That's what professionalism and editors are for.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/14/09 8:46pm

Pizza Monster: The height of rudeness? I'm sorry, but the way I was raised, you should care about being correct. Always. Even if it costs you a little face, you should care.

If their tone is insulting enough that the motive is clearly not to be helpful, that's reason enough to assume they're being a dick and flip the bird in response. But if you blow a gasket at me when I gently inform you that "mischevous" has three syllables after the third misuse in ten minutes, you are the rude one.

[Reply](#)

- [P.G. Roadhouse](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/16/09 12:14am

Sorry to have to gently inform you it's spelled mischievous. Thanks for caring.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/16/09 8:40am

You are a gentleman and a scholar, and I salute you.

[Reply](#)

- [P.G. Roadhouse](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/17/09 11:42am

I don't care what anyone says, you're way better than Comet.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/18/09 5:13pm

@Ajax- I was raised was not to embarrass someone if they didn't pronounce something correctly, it's no one's place least of all mine. And how does your being raised to care about being correct allow calling out strangers who didn't have your upbringing or education? Who wasn't talking to you in the first place? Did those who raised mean for you to care about yourself being correct, or that everyone around you be correct? Try it on the subway or on the street sometime and we'll see how far you get with "Well I was raised..." snobby bullshit. Reread what I read and think about it.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting

8/18/09 5:15pm

\* Who WERE'T talking to you..etc

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/18/09 11:00pm

Argh \*\* Who WEREN'T talking to you..etc

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)I Find Tinsel Distracting  
8/20/09 10:16pm

See? You \*do\* care about being correct! ;)

And I have in fact corrected strangers on the street (usually in line or in a crowd of some sort), thereby inviting myself into conversations I wasn't in before. Never gotten any grief about it, but perhaps I'm just that charming.

So I maintain that it's not ipso facto rude behavior, and when it's done courteously there's no need to be offended.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 11:00am

Son of an excuse!

The whole 'son' worship tag at the end seemed terribly tacked on to me, even as a kid (and I liked this episode, the idea of Romans and TV seemed to go together somehow.. I remember learning the word 'gladiator' from it which allowed me to wow my dad by understanding what 'gladiators of the grid-iron' meant: Football!...

Even hating the end which made me feel embarrassed and uncomfortable somehow, without being able to express it, I was quite thankful for it because it gave me leverage with my christian parents to be able to show that Science Fiction and Trek weren't un-christian at all...

A real get out of Hades free card... Otherwise... I shudder to think:

Gilligan's Island was on at the same time, and my little brother loved it... Talk about Hell!

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 11:36am

Always thought it was lame that the professor and Mary-Anne didn't get their names in the theme song during until after a season or two. I mean, WTF?

[Reply](#)

- [Clobberella](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 12:14pm

What's this "and the rest" crap?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 12:17pm

Yes, how is it easier to say "and the rest" than "the Professor and Mary Anne". Two people do not make a "the rest."

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 2:32pm

Yeah, the Son Worshiper idea doesn't sit too well with me either. The episode ends on a "We're All Christians on This Bus" note that just doesn't work. Or maybe it's just a recognition that the society is

moving toward monotheism. At least they don't break out a copy of the New Testament, a-la "Omega Glory". Still, this one works better than the Nazi Planet idea, even though the set-up is far less plausible.

Seems a bit sad that the ship is happy to leave the slaves as slaves, waving it off with a "What a lot of fun they have to look forward to!" attitude.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 2:37pm

Oh, and "Hodgkins' Law of Parallel Planet Development"? Not buying that one at all, although at least it's an attempt to explain the various Earth-like planets in the series.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 2:43pm

At least Gilligan's Island had a Christmas episode, even though it's marred at the end by a bad sound loop job.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 5:09pm

And the Romans had sun cults, damn it Bones. Helios, Apollo, and later Mithras.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 5:47pm

To me the truly strange thing about the bit with the Christians is that it got in there under the watch of Gene Roddenberry, famously (among the sufficiently geeky anyway) a staunch secularist. It's almost as weird as knowing that atheist extraordinaire Joss Whedon wrote a Buffy episode featuring a (awwww) Christmas Miracle.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 5:52pm

And how come Destro got his name dropped off after the first half of the first season? This "GI Joe against Cobra, the enemy" crap just doesn't do it for me.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/13/09 7:44pm

I always thought of Roddenberry as more of a proto-Scientologist. But his pal, L. Ron Hubbard, beat him to the punch.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 4:28am

Sheesh, I'd forgotten about the Bradbury story with Jesus on Mars! Man, I thought I'd dreamt that!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 10:14am



As much as I love Bradbury, I'm having a hard time recalling that part of Martian Chronicles. It sounds just fucking terrible.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 12:32pm

There's only one Jesus from Mars, and that's Valentine Michael Smith!

Seriously, though, I think the story you're referring to is "The Fire Balloons," which is more about missionaries trying to bring religion to non-corporeal balls of light on Mars. What kind of sin a balls of light that can't be killed and has nothing to steal is a matter of some debate. It only appears in some editions of the book, (and The Illustrated Man) so this may be why Mr. Caster doesn't recall it.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 12:34pm

Should say, "What kind of sin balls of light that can't be killed and has nothing to steal can commit is a matter of some debate."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 12:36pm

I don't remember it as part of the Chronicles either (though I stand to be corrected) but rather as a separate story... I may have even had it filed under Heinlein (strange..)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/15/09 8:02pm

The one I'm speaking of is a group of astronauts who land on a planet (Mars?) and find out that some guy has just been there, had a great influence, and already left... The capper is, it was Jesus his own self.

[Reply](#)

- [JLRoberson](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/15/09 8:36pm

And thing is, Christianity did not end the Roman empire at all. The two merged. Constantine adopted it not because he decided that was The Way, but because he believed Christianity's God had acted on his behalf in a battle, and as with all Roman religious views, he hitched himself to what he thought of as the winner. It wasn't so much a religious conversion as a consumer going with a new service provider that did a better job.

The people who sacked Rome? Christians. The Romans at the time? Christians. It's a silly ahistorical myth that Christianity "won." It bought in.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:08pm

Assignment: Missing

OK, so when I was a kid (say 1985), Star Trek was on at 10:30 pm every night on the local ABC affiliate. I set my 1980s VCR to record it every night and had a nice little collection of tapes (complete with 80s commercials) of every episode. I had 6 shows per tape with a little list of what was where, and I watched them a LOT.

My point is, it was a really, really long time before I saw Assignment Earth, and I couldn't believe it because (1) where was it from my collection and (2) it was (good or bad) unlike all the other episodes.

My QUESTION is, did anyone else have a similar experience? Was AE omitted from the syndication list or purposely put on low rotation?

[Reply](#)

- [Random Internet Trek Dork](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/13/09 12:51pm

Star Trek was on 6pm M-F (and I think maybe at 7pm as well for a while) on a local UHF station (later the Fox affiliate) in Columbus, OH in the late 80s and early 90s, and I definitely saw Assignment Earth many times. The only episode I had never seen until recently was The Cloud Minders, which leads me to wonder if some stations just randomly don't buy some episodes or what. Skipping A:E makes sense in a way, tCM not so much.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/13/09 2:35pm

I recall that "Assignment: Earth" was aired just as frequently as most of the others during the 70's syndication era.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 4:45am

I saw it and 'The Cloud Minders' pretty often on mid-70's Denver. Missing almost entirely over the decade were 'Wolf in the Fold' and 'Day of the Dove'

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 9:34am

I guess its just me, then.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 10:21am

In 70s-80s DC, "Wolf in the Fold" was on heavy rotation, as was "Assignment: Earth", unfortunately. However, "The Immunity Syndrome" was one that was rarely shown, and I'm not sure I saw it until years later. Every time I hear the joke about seeing every episode except the one with the giant space amoeba...I'm there, dude.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 9:25pm

I definitely caught "Assignment: Earth" in Chicago on MetroMedia 32 in the early-to-mid 1980s several times. But it took me another 10 years at least to see "And The Children Shall Lead."

I remember sitting bolt upright and wondering "What the hell is this one? I've never seen this before!" Even my father the Trekkie, a fan since the series premiere in the '60s, had to think long and hard to place it.

(Although that could also be due to the fact that it was kind of a sucky episode.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:30pm

Death Platforms!

Zack, I can't believe that you don't remember the orbiting Death Platforms of 1968.

Maybe that's because they were very short-lived, having been shot out of the sky by Apollo 8 on its way to the moon. Still, what kind of history are they teaching these days?

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)barefoot jim  
8/13/09 12:36pm

I think Colossus and Guardian took them out.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)barefoot jim  
8/13/09 2:36pm

This is the voice of Colossus. This is the voice of world control.

I learned two things from that movie:

The computer still watches while you have sex.

If a nuclear bomb is about to go off next to you, there's no use running around screaming.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)barefoot jim  
8/13/09 2:43pm

Yes, Colossus invented internet porn.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)barefoot jim  
8/13/09 5:43pm

Gotta admit - that is a scary thought. For all we know, the Sci-Fi Channel satellite has a nuke tucked under the fender, just in case.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim  
8/14/09 9:33am

Well and don't forget, Reagan's SDI "star wars" program was roundly and widely criticized for militarizing space. Somehow we feel safer knowing that the Ruskies need to shoot something off from land to get to us, rather than just dropping it from orbit.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)barefoot jim  
8/14/09 12:18pm

I wouldn't be surprised if we've got both nukes in space and some sort of SDI System (perhaps one that both defend against ICBMs and other satellites) already implemented.

It only makes sense to spread our offensive capabilities out as much as possible, and we need something to protect our GPS and spy satellites

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:39pm

Assignment: Earth Not Picked Up

Alas, think of all the great guest appearances that retro-TV geeks have been denied:

See Gary & Teri battle

Chuck Connors as the general who attempts a coup against the U.S. government!

Brian Keith as the labor baron who plots a worldwide strike!

Robert Stack as the alien from the evil planet that wants Earth to fuck up!

Eve Arden and Kaye Ballard as intergalactic mothers-in-law whose violent war threatens planetary destruction!

Larry Hagman as the mad scientist whose nerve gas will kill off all life on earth!

June Lockhart as the Empress of the Mole People!

Wernner Klemperer as the leader of the Bunion of Boviet Bocialist Bepublics (BBBB) who plans to CONQUER THE WORLD!

And Special Guest Star Morey Amsterdam.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)magnus

8/13/09 1:32pm

SyFy channel could totally do a modern day version of this show. Teri Garr could costar as the boss with a new young duo as her agents. Any Trek actor from any show could guest star.

Why the hell not there's been worse ideas.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)magnus

8/13/09 2:42pm

I'd prefer they picked up that Roddenberry flop, "Earth II." Post-apocalyptic Earth with time-traveler Gary Lockwood and a two-belly-buttoned Mariette Hartley.

Or his other attempt at basically the same thing with "Genesis II."

I can't believe "Earth: Final Conflict" ran for five years.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)magnus

8/14/09 9:31am

Gentle-

Don't you think that was a function of the real rise of syndication to plug time for cable? I think there have been tons of shows that had a good life in the 90s-2000s that never, ever, would have made it under the 3-4 network system. Sci Fi probably has benefited near most from this because fans tend to be more invested in the programming than the average, say, urban comedy starring Jim Belushi or suburban comedy starring a Wayans brother.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)magnus

8/14/09 2:45pm

Science fiction was always given pretty short shrift on network TV, that's for sure, probably primarily because of budget constraints. All you need for a prime-time soap opera is money to rent the occasional ritzy home as a backdrop. Need a cowboy show? Head to the ranch and get a couple of horses. You didn't have to build entire planets.

So, yeah, early syndication did help a number of sci-fi series see the light of day, and actually have relatively decent runs. I would include that "War of the Worlds" series that also ran about the time of "Earth: Final Conflict." It would be interesting to see a new sci-fi series on another channel besides "SyFy," though. Now that creating okay special effects has gotten considerably cheaper.

An nice post-Apocalyptic show would be good. Damnation Alley, The Series?

[Reply](#)

- [James DeRiven](#)Gentle Herpes  
4/10/18 1:33am

I realize I'm close to a decade late with this observation, but having watched Earth: Final Conflict when it was on I would argue that "ran" is too strong an adjective. "A Series Of Events That Seems To Have Occurred Maybe" perhaps comes closer.

Earth: Final Conflict is a mess, to put it mildly.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [meyer](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 5:25pm

Assignment: Earth Script

There's an interesting website that examines draft and final TOS scripts (and also those for the The Motion Picture and Search for Spock):

[http://www.fastcopyinc.com/...](http://www.fastcopyinc.com/)

Assignment: Earth was originally a stand-alone series pilot script, and when rejected was turned into a Trek episode. NARRATOR: In the hands of this one man...

could rest the future of all mankind. His name...Gary Seven...born in the year 2319 A.D. The only survivor of Earth's attempt to send a man back through time to today.

Assignment...fight an enemy who is already here, trying to destroy us. If he fails...there'll be no tomorrow!

The Trek script has the teaser opening with the bridge crew watching an episode of "Bonanza" on the viewscreen! Sheesh!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)meyer  
8/13/09 6:45pm

That's a cool idea. Good point! No money in the budget for that though.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)meyer  
8/13/09 7:48pm

"The only survivor?" What about that dude who knocked up Sarah Connor? What's he, chopped liver?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)meyer  
8/14/09 4:53am

How about if they were watching a video for Hendrix' (by way of Dylan) 'All Along the Watchtower'?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)meyer  
8/14/09 9:28am

Good Lord, is there anything not on the Internet?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen  
8/14/09 4:53pm

B&C vs. OG

Apropos of last week's discussion of the various plot flaws that some of us perceived in The Omega Glory, I would like to point out that Bread and Circuses has the courage of its convictions: the premise is 20th century Romans, we get that premise in the teaser, and the rest of the episode sticks with it, and works through some interesting implications. Even though the idea of a planet identical to Earth except that it's 300 years behind in development, and the Romans took over the planet is bone-jarringly stupid, no less so than the Yangs and Kohms, still we don't care because they fed it to us up front. It doesn't feel as if they've insulted our intelligence.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)alurin  
8/14/09 9:15pm

But on the other hand, the script for B&C also feels a little fat (what do we learn from talking to the slave girl?), and the It's All About Kirk motif that weighs down some of the weaker Trek episodes is mined so obviously and openly in this one that it's hard to believe Shatner didn't write it. Omega Glory is fast-paced and shares the spotlight a little more, something I always find to be a mark of more entertaining Trek episodes.

But rather than dig up that dead horse for another beating, I'll leave it at that and say: I do enjoy the bit when the Enterprise Three are leaving the camp with Flavius, and as the old guy offers a benediction in the name of the Son, his ADR carries over into the next scene which begins with the camera pointed straight up. That's a good head-fake which sets up the reveal at the end, without (as you say) insulting our intelligence.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)alurin  
8/15/09 11:38am

The thing I don't like about B&C, besides the gratuitous Christian message at the end, is the emphasis on masculinity. The "it's all about Kirk" scenes are basically designed to show that Kirk qualifies as a "real man" in the Roman scheme of things, as opposed to Merrick. That's the point of the slave girl scene.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:04pm

"They... threw me a few curves - - no time to explain."

Great write up Zack, but I don't think these eps get the props they deserve. "Bread" at least.

Yes we've seen it before with Chicago and the Nazis, but this one does it best. The interplay between Spock and McCoy is never better, whether they're in the Procounsul's quarters(Spock: "What the bad guy says is logical." Mac: "Are you out of your head?!") or fighting in the arena(Spock: "Need help?" Mac : "Whatever gave you that idea?! Of all the stupid, illogical etc").

That arena fight was AWESOME too, Kirk bluffing nonchalance while his 2 friends are in a death match.

Spock kicking ass, Mac cracking wise.... AMOK TIME FIGHT MUSIC..... fan-f'n-tastic.

Zack you mention "I'm worried about Jim" then cut to space pimp Kirk kicking it with that hot slave girl(one of the hottest in the series too) Drucilla. Not only is that the funniest cutaway in the series, when we get to the jailbreak and Mac, all concerned in his damp jail cell, says "Jim what did they do to you?", you get the funniest line EVER in the series possibly(my subject line people). Then: Swords only. Dramatic sacrifice, escape by the

skin of their teeth. C'mon we haven't seen action, and high stakes, with the right mix of humor like this in a while. Yes a retread but this time done right. Great stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/13/09 12:14pm

The Son of God bit grated me then and grates me now. It just seems like a cheap tack on.

(which is a bit odd, given my love for the old Twilight Zone. Its a COOKBOOK!, etc. Hmmm.)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/13/09 12:42pm

Zack, ha true. But hey when have sci fi guards used their brains? I'm looking at you, Stormtroopers. Orders are "swords only", not, "You two first in an orderly fashion" They're just followin' orders is all. JBMD, (how you doing buddy), yeah the Son of God stuff... I dunno, we had big giant cat and sorcery for their Halloween show, was this the Easter episode? ha

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:09pm

Bread and Circuses = Shit Sandwich

(sorry, I just cracked myself up a bit there)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/13/09 12:12pm

...so anyway, the weird thing about this (which I just recently realized, thanks Zack) is Roman Planet comes only TWO WEEKS after Cold War Planet? Seems like they would have said- hey, only one parallel development show per month, please.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 4:46am

Shark Sandwich..

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/14/09 5:55pm

@nigiasia: Interesting argument.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 12:09pm

More B&C

It's also a good bit when Marcus offers Kirk a woman for his last night before execution because he's a real man, versus Merik, for whom he has no respect. And Kirk's expression is all "Well, yes, thank you; it's true".

I had to read a book in high school called The Davidson Affair (get it?) that told the resurrection story set in a 1960's Roman Empire with TV & guns & washing machines & all. The Modern Roman Empire is an interesting concept and great setting.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)magnus

8/13/09 2:33pm

See the Gateways to Geekery re Alternate History.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)magnus

8/14/09 4:48am

As well as any number of Phil Dick's hallucinations (or were they?)...

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

8/14/09 12:19am

Teri Garr...

she was hot then, right?

and she remained that way at least through The Conversation...at what point did she become genetically fused with Diane Keaton?

[Reply](#)

- [magnustibber](#)

8/14/09 10:58am

Does the phrae "What knockers" ring a bell?

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)tibber

8/14/09 4:09pm

I cannot think of Teri Garr without thinking Hairy Scar. Thank you, AVC.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

3/03/14 3:52pm

It's not that Assignment: Earth was such a horrible episode so much as it involved very little of Kirk, Spock, etc.... and I had a hard time following along... I couldn't figure out exactly what this guy was supposed to be doing, or what he was trying to stop... and whether he was a good guy or not. It wasn't until the very end that I realized exactly what was going on. It seemed like it could have been a very interesting episode if it had been written differently. And like the reviewer said, why would the Enterprise return to 1968 just to take some notes?? Don't they have all that stuff in their computer banks already? And why 1968 of all years... besides the fact that that just happened to be the current year when the episode was made?

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Jay Mucci

6/19/14 4:05pm

"I couldn't figure out exactly what this guy was supposed to be doing, or what he was trying to stop..."

That was the point, really. Neither did Kirk and Spock, and what suspense there was followed from not knowing whether Seven was doing the kind of thing that we eventually saw him do, or dumping a bunch of nuclear weapons on someone, triggering world war three.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen

8/14/09 12:22am



March toward cancellation = rehashed plots?

It's worth mentioning that this would have been the end of the series, if it weren't for the famous write-in campaign. And there seems to be a general sag in episode quality, or at least in careful editing and bullshit detection, over the last part of this season. Any correlation?

Mostly, I'm trying to figure out how that "Son" idea came about, as it seems so unlike Roddenberry. Was it to counter some Christian flak caused by the blatantly anti-religious episodes? I understand a lot of forces go into a TV show, but GR was usually very good at getting his way. Maybe he just said "fuck it, the show's over, may as well activate the plot recycler and throw in Jesus," then turned his attention to Gary 7.

[Reply](#)

- [Gentle Herpes](#)Chico McDirk  
8/14/09 2:49pm

Another thing you notice is the general laziness of the acting. It's like most of the cast know they're not doing all that hot in the ratings, and the stories are getting iffier, and they're starting to just going though the motions.

[Reply](#)

- [Haystacks](#)Zack Handlen  
3/07/13 5:49pm

How depressing to think that apparently the entire Universe is just filled with lame "Earth" copies. How Dull.

That said, I forgot in the Original Series the Universal Translator had not been created yet. Does that mean all the Romulans and Klingons learned English? How nice of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Haystacks  
6/19/14 4:09pm

You either get English, or a series that's a minor tv footnote, with six episodes of invented alien languages plus subtitles that's cancelled in October.

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Zack Handlen  
8/15/09 11:56am

Vulcan headgear

The highlight of these two episodes for me was the number of hats Spock went through.

The best one was the second one he wore in Assignment: Earth, after he lost the ski cap. I thought he was about to wander off and go fishing. I think I would have rather watched that episode.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMikes](#)simonillyan  
8/15/09 10:11pm

With the one fur hat I was surprised he wasn't grabbed by the authorities for being a Russian Spy.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)Zack Handlen  
8/14/09 2:58am

"I've been on some strange worlds, witnessed some strange customs; maybe this is a form of torture."

One of your best write-ups yet, ZH; no sense of Trek-fatigue for me. Your take (and I've been a fan longer, and am older, than you) always gives me a genuine laugh and a happy face, and even some nostalgic sadness, at both Trek's foibles and its strengths. Slave Girl Drusilla, though, as has already been pointed out (actress Lois Jewell) is maybe the Supreme ST Kirk Babe Goddess in terms of looks — "Food, wine, whatever you wish,"

— indeed! I also like AE more than you, maybe because of the "lost pilot" mythos and Teri G, still my fave guest on Letterman. Lansing's pretty cool, too; his explanation about this cat/girlfriend being like his "guard dog... good fun. But, yes, a lesser installment.

I hope you are equally generous with the films and consider them in the context of their productions — though I think IV is a genuinely good, maybe even a greatish movie, without contextualization. It's a really well-made picture.

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#) Captain January  
8/14/09 3:21am

Sorry for the typos.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen  
8/14/09 6:09am

Captain Kirk Wants to Make Love to the Mountain  
published this way late in the game last time, so here's the repost. Well worth checking out:

No joke folks, probably the best thing to come out of ST V:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#) Richelieu Jr  
8/14/09 8:15am

I'll never be able to watch a mountain-climbing scene again.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#) Zack Handlen  
8/14/09 1:29pm

Space Platforms?

That Roddenberry decided to have the Crew of the Enterprise travel back to 1968 is obviously because if the spin-off works it will take place in present day, but what makes it retarded is the space program was still in it's infancy (moon landing a year away), any Star Wars Death Platform debates don't even come up (and shot down) until Reagan. So here is a case of Roddenberry creating a fake present that doesn't even reflect a possible future. Maybe the Enterprise went back in time and were viewing an alternate Earth.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen  
8/15/09 7:46pm

Norman Spinrad

I just found out that Mr Spinrad lives here in Paris and I get to meet him next week on the jury for Le Festival de l'Etrange (The Strange Film Festival) a local film fest that shows little-known and odd films...

Any questions I should ask? I'm so hopped up on The Doomsday Machine right now, but apparently he wrote for a TV show about werewolves?

Any info, friends o' mine?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#) Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 4:01pm

Lens Flare Alert

Nice to see another location shoot for Bread & Circuses - and a "Kung-Fu"-style lens flare to boot! Blame this one for JJ Abrams' "inspiration".

I was also amused by McCoy's statement that Vulcans hide their emotions because they're really all incredibly insecure.

[Reply](#)

- [Tyrannorabbit](#)Zack Handlen  
4/14/12 8:39pm

Spock's line about the "interesting experiences" is followed by a fabulous look of shame from Nimoy, casting his gaze down sheepishly, trying his best to smile through a grimace.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
8/13/09 11:58am

B&C

...and now for a simple execution.

The Romulans should have totally sued this planet for trademark infringement.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen  
8/14/09 12:27am

The Enterprise Incident

Aren't they all?

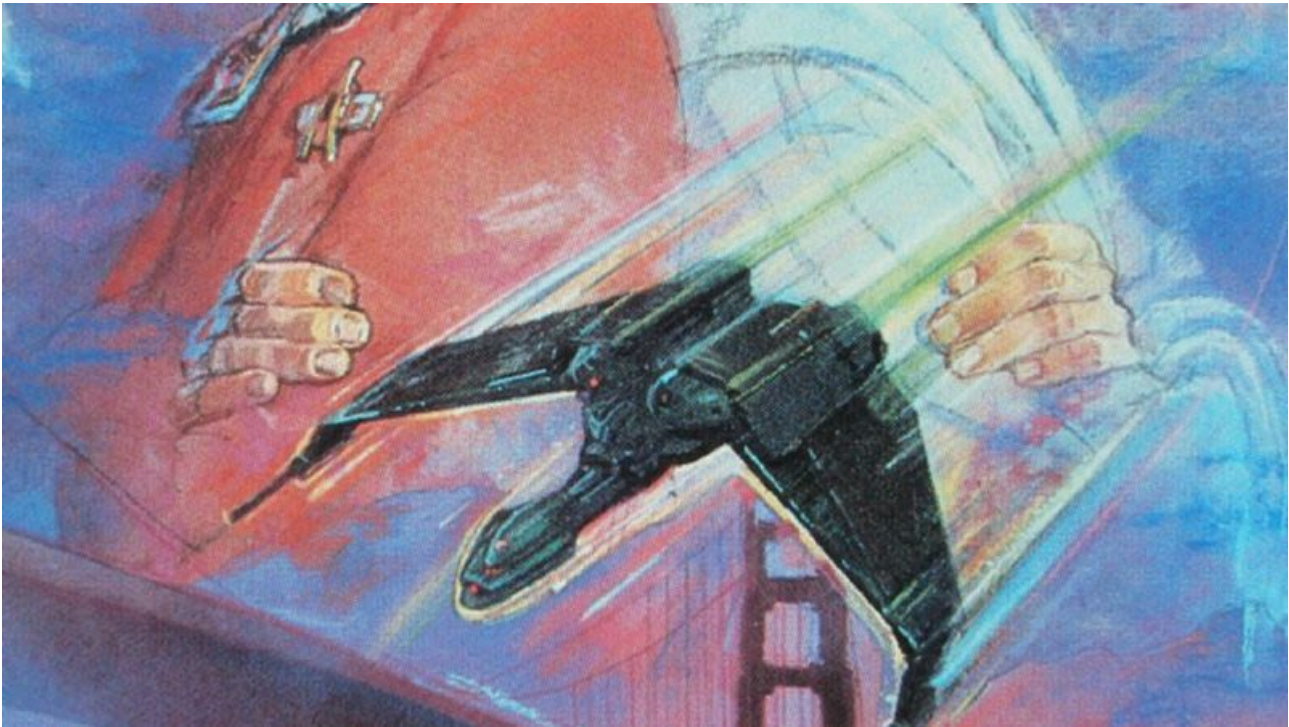
[Reply](#)

*Star Trek: Star Trek III: The Search For Spock / Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published August 20, 2009

[Comments \(213\)](#)



Stories have to move forward. If you were chart out the plot progression of a successful genre film, you'd probably find lots of curves and loops and the occasional cul-de-sac, but overall, the thing would progress from left to right fairly steadily. Too much back-tracking and you gunk up the works, too much stalling and all those delicate lies and concessions that make a fictional world real start to collapse under their own weight. If you've ever been to the movies and found yourself checking your watch around the two-thirds mark, you'll get what I'm talking about. (And it's such a definitive moment, too, like somebody in your head flipping a switch between "Interested" and "So, how much is left?")

One of the things that makes *Star Trek III: The Search For Spock* such an odd duck is that the entire movie is, in a sense, its own cul-de-sac. Our leads aren't trying to save the world or defeat some terrible enemy (although there's a little of that last near the end). They're just trying to return to the status quo that the climax of *Star Trek II: Wrath Of Khan* overturned. It's like the first act of *Return of the Jedi* stretched to feature length, only instead of rescuing Han Solo from the clutches of the universe's most dastardly giant slug, here we've got Kirk, McCoy and the rest fighting against time to get Spock's body and Spock's soul (or "katra") reunited. Ostensibly this is to preserve his knowledge back on Vulcan, but I can't imagine anyone thinking we weren't going to hit the end credits without seeing Nimoy doing that eyebrow thing again. There's precious little that's new in *Search*; in fact, the film rejects the idea of innovation, either mocking it (with Scott's easy monkey-wrenching of the *Excelsior*) or actively negating it, with a conclusion that not only restores everybody's favorite Vulcan to life, but also destroys *Khan*'s two biggest additions to the mythology: Kirk's son David, and the planet Genesis. In many ways, it's an entry with a calculated design on longevity. "Don't worry," we're reassured. "These guys may look old, but they've still got some miles left in them. We'll be watching them do the same things in slightly different ways for many years to come."

And yet for the life of me, I can't find it in myself to dislike *Search*. Sure it's redundant. Sure, it wastes the momentum of the first act with a climax so rote you can almost hear the writer admitting defeat. But it's fun, by and large. There's something charmingly old school in its machinations, and while its ambitions aren't terribly, well, ambitious, it's still a decent time-waster, and a nice bridge between the space opera weightiness of *Khan* and the light absurdity of *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*. Its main flaw is that it never entirely justifies its existence; Spock's death was a satisfying,

moving capstone to the series, and to undo that for no better reason than "just cuz" is always going to come off weak.

One thing that's easy to forget, especially if, like me, you grew up watching this; *Search* takes place right on the heels of the end of *Khan*, which makes the sudden shift in Shatner's toupee especially jarring. (Whatever you do, don't look at it too long. It kills the whole movie.) With David and Saavik (a flatly wooden Robin Curtis; Kirstie Alley wanted too much money to return to the role) already headed back to Genesis for study, it's left to Kirk and the others to mourn Spock in their own way. One of the better aspects of *Search* is that with Spock out of the action, the rest of the crew gets a chance to fill up the vacuum of his absence, and we get a much stronger sense of Kirk, Uhura, Chekov, McCoy, Scotty, and Sulu as a family unit, and not just a bunch of people who work together. Seeing everyone in Kirk's apartment, mourning the loss of their friend, creates a warm glow that covers up a lot of the movie's weaker moments.

Of course, that connection doesn't stop Kirk from hustling everyone out when Sarek arrives. (At Sarek's request, of course.) We've talked before about the odd juxtaposition of mysticism and clinic-ism in Vulcan culture, and once again we've got intellect (in this case, Spock's katra, his essential self) being preserved by an arcane ritual that we, as outsiders, never completely understand. Obviously this is just as much goobledy gook as is necessary for resurrection, but it has a nice thematic ring to it. And it allows McCoy to get his own minor subplot. As Kirk himself discovers (via some suspiciously well-edited security footage), Spock passed his essence to McCoy before dying, which means we get Nimoy dubbing in some off-screen lines that are supposedly coming from DeForest Kelley's mouth, as well as having McCoy's personality shift ever so slightly to the pointy-eared. Bones' clumsy attempt to book passage back to Genesis in the Starfleet equivalent of Mos Eisley is great, as is his reaction to learning what Spock did to him: "It's just his revenge for losing all those arguments."

*Search* isn't as overtly comedic as *Voyage Home*, but it gets a brief charge out of the ensemble being witty and kicking ass. The best bit of the whole film is when Starfleet tells Kirk he can't go back to Genesis for "political reasons," and Kirk decides he'll just take the *Enterprise* anyway. With a little help from his friends, of course. *Search* is Leonard Nimoy's first time in the director's chair for the franchise, and he goes out of his way to make sure that everybody gets a chance to shine: Sulu beats up a guard twice his size, Uhura locks a bratty ensign in a closet, and Scotty gets to take-down that new-fangled spaceship that everybody's so keen on. (Chekov gets screwed, I guess, but at least he has a whole sub-plot in *Voyage* to himself.) If *Khan* was about Kirk coming to terms with getting old, *Search* is about celebrating seniors. It's ridiculous, but I find myself grinning every time.

The rest of the movie can't quite keep up the pace; it never turns into a slog (although I still find the sequence back on Vulcan where Spock gets brain back fairly dull), but it's predictable. There's a crazy Klingon named Kruge (Christopher Lloyd doing his best John Lithgow) who's become obsessed with the secrets of Genesis. He destroys the ship that David and Saavik hitched a ride on, then sends a couple of thugs down to the planet to menace them face to face. As scene-chewing as Kruge is, he's mostly just a missed opportunity. We've already had a larger-than-life character railing about Genesis, and no matter how much spit Lloyd sprays, he's nowhere near as interesting and threatening as Montalbahn. Story-wise, the only reason he's around at all is so Kirk gets to fight somebody in person for once (and what a pathetic, anti-climactic fight it is; makes you appreciate the fact that Kirk and Khan are never face-to-face), and so that David can sacrifice himself heroically. Oh, and so the *Enterprise* can get blown up real good.

Of course, just bringing up the katra concept wasn't going to be enough to get Spock back—otherwise Vulcans would be functionally immortal, and that probably would've come up before now. Instead, we have the Genesis planet somehow resetting Spock's body, making him young and then aging him as the planet ages. It's one of those things that makes a kind of surface intuitive sense, but doesn't hold up at all under scrutiny. Why would his corpse de-age and then age again? If Genesis is some kind of fountain of life (would this work on any corpse? Does it only work a little while after the planet's created? If enough time had passed, and if the planet hadn't been destroying itself, would Kruge's dead crewmembers turn into baby Klingons?), that would seem to have some pretty serious ramifications on things. Thankfully, the planet tears itself apart before anyone can really think about it.

*Search for Spock* is basically for fans-only, and for once, I don't mean that in an entirely pejorative sense. What you get out of it depends entirely on how much you care about these characters, and how much of a charge you get at the very end, when Spock is back to (sort of) himself. He's befuddled, but he eventually recognizes Kirk, and then he does that

eyebrow raise... I dunno. I'm not sure I'd go so far as to agree with "The needs of the one outweigh the needs of the many," but it has a nice ring to it; and if I'm honest, I'll admit that *Star Trek* without Spock isn't really *Star Trek* at all.

Hey, remember the '80's? Remember when saving the whales was a pretty big deal? I sort of do. I mean, whales are big and I assume they're friendly for some reason, and they're slow moving which makes them easy targets, so they deserve to be saved. And I can only assume that they were saved eventually, because you don't really hear a lot about it these days. *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, Leonard Nimoy's second time in the director's chair, is a polished, well-balanced audience-pleaser. It's a deeply ingratiating movie, the sort that comes out of the gate with a big goofy grin and a hand out-stretched, and keeps patting your back and offering you sodas for the entirety of its running time. It doesn't have *Khan's* edge, or any edge at all, really; despite the fact that Earth is threatened once again by a giant space probe that could destroy all life on the planet, the only truly serious moment in the film is the opening dedication to the crew of the *Challenger*. But it does have Kirk saving some whales, and who doesn't like whales? If *Search* is for fans only, it's no real stretch to say that *Voyage Home* is meant to be a kind of gateway drug. It's nice to know the characters going in, but it's not exactly necessary.

Which isn't to say that *Voyage Home* is disconnected from the previous *Trek* films. *Voyage Home* picks up right about where the previous movie left off; in this case, that's on planet Vulcan, with Spock working to get back to his real self while Kirk and the rest face the threat of serious criminal charges back home. A Klingon ambassador is already calling for their heads, claiming they "stole" a Bird Of Prey and killed its crew without provocation. (Hilariously, we get actual footage from *Search* of the Enterprise blowing up. Did Kirk send this from the Klingon ship? Or did they just happen to have an invisible camera crew in the area?) The threat of government sanction is never that much of a threat—whatever Kirk's crimes, it's hard to seriously censure someone who's saved the planet before—but it does provide a structural anchor for the rest of the story. And it's not like we could just forget the whole "steal a ship" thing completely.

As always, though, there are more serious things to worry about. Another giant, mysterious object has shown up on Earth's doorstep, blocking the sun and draining power on the planet. Kirk and the others are the only ones who can help, mainly because they were busy on Vulcan when probe arrived; it's up to them to decipher that the signals the probe is sending out are much like the songs of the humpback whale, a species that was hunted to extinction centuries before. Since the fate of the world is in question, the only answer is to travel back in time to the mid-eighties, snag a couple of whales, bring them to the present, and hope to god those whales will lie like crazy. ("Oh, hey, no, we're here, we just, y'know, not really answering the phone this week. It's stress and all, right, sometimes you need to get away from everything. It's not like we've been dead for three hundred years or anything!")

Four movies in, and already the series has stopped trying for new ideas. While the design and intention are both different, the whale song probe is basically just V'Ger with an upgrade; the crew of the *Enterprise* is so used to time travel at this point that nobody blinks an eye when Kirk suggests it (even McCoy takes the concept in stride), and the bulk of the time spend in 1986 follows the familiar pattern of your fish-out-of-water comedy, with lots of confusion over slang and cultural mores. It's probably asking too much to expect a franchise this old to surprise us, but the more time you spend in the universe of *Trek* and its multitude of spin-offs, the more you find that all that mythology and all those races are really just the back-drop for the same five or six plots endlessly repeated. Occasionally the show can rise above this ("The Inner Light" from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is a great example), and it's a little much to expect commercial television to consistently exploit its possibilities. But it does drag you down a little, seeing how close to Earth "where no man has gone before" really is.

That's more a general criticism than one specific to *Voyage Home*, though. I have friends who despise this movie for what it does to its main characters—while there's no "I know this ship like the back of my hand." moment here, having Scotty talking into a computer mouse comes perilously close to making him look like a moron. I can sympathize with those complaints, and I certainly don't consider this a great film; but it's so relentlessly genial I have a hard time disliking it for long. Chekov's "Who's on first" routine after getting arrested is forced, but McCoy's bitching about the state of '80's medical science is perfectly in character, and Spock's inability to swear properly ("They are not the hell your whales.") always makes me grin. This sticks to the ensemble piece style established in *Search*, and everyone involved is so clearly delighted to be doing what they're doing that the enthusiasm becomes infectious.

There's no villain here to speak of; there's a brief appearance by a team of evil whalers near the end (the "evil" is redundant, possibly), but apart from that one short stop into *Captain Planet* territory, there's not much danger. Even Kirk's sort of romance with the whale friendly Catherine Hicks (another eventual *Seventh Heaven* alumnus) is muted. Shatner's putting on all the charm, but there's no chemistry between the two. It's like watching an insurance salesman flirt with a potential client before closing the deal. Their last conversation, after Hicks has hitchhiked a ride to the future, makes it seem almost like she just used Kirk to get a trip to outer space; it would've made her character more interesting, for sure. As is, she's a means to an end, and not much else.

Still, there is some interesting character work happening here. While by and large the main cast is static (there's occasional talk throughout the series that Kirk is getting old, but really all that amounts to is him moping a little before getting reminded he's amazing), Spock has to come to terms with being alive once more. There's a childish quality to him that we've never seen in the character—while Spock's always mocked human emotion, this is the first time we see him actually struggling to comprehend it, and what its value might be. His wild-card status is exploited for decent laughs, and registers strongly enough that in the end, when he asks Sarek to tell his mother he feels "fine," it provides an honest emotional charge. For once, Spock appears to have struck a balance between his Vulcan and human sides, without short-changing either.

Like *Search*, *Voyage Home* lags some in the home stretch; while *Voyage Home* is the better film, once the whales are rescued, there's not much drama left to resolve. The Earth is saved, the *Enterprise* crew gets the ovation it deserves, and the end finds Kirk demoted to captain and once more on the helm of the ship that was always his first, best destiny. In a way, that's what the title meant all along—home for our heroes isn't Earth, and it never will be. While neither *Search* nor *Voyage Home* are particularly ambitious, and while neither of them come close to the emotional depths the series is capable of, there's still a deep satisfaction in seeing old friends risking their lives for each other, and in the end, coming back to where they belong.

#### Grades:

***Star Trek III: The Search For Spock*: B-**

***Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*: B+**

#### Stray Observations:

The *Star Trek* recaps will be going on a hiatus for the next few months; hopefully we'll be starting back up with Season 3 in December. I'm taking a break from *Trek* in order to dig into *The Prisoner*, starting with the original series and leading into the AMC remake this November. It's been a blast, gang; and I hope you'll all join me in the Village for chess, some light interrogation, and the vilest weather balloon in the world. Be seeing you!

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (212)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Prole Hole](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 10:06am

Are you serious?

You are going to be covering *The Prisoner*? Man this is news almost as good as the Kraftwerk reissue! Can't wait for it! Although of course looking forward to S3 as well in December.

Keep the geeky TV flag flying high Zach, we love you!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 10:57am



Noooooooo!

I don't want this to go on hiatus, not even for a week. The last time I missed a week I was confused and frightened for the whole time.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 11:03am

Man I'm bummed this is on hiatus but stoked for the Prisoner as well.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 11:33am

I'm definitely bummed about the hiatus but I can understand the Trek fatigue. In recent weeks I've found my self more interested in cherry-picking TNG reruns (the drumhead, the best of both worlds, etc) than keeping up with TOS. As long as you don't forget about us come December I'm cool with it though! (as if you've been waiting for my permission)

And while I've never seen The Prisoner, I've heard a bit about it - what's it all about? Is it worth picking up on DVD and following?

[Reply](#)

- [stackenblochen](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 11:36am

Hot damn, The Prisoner! Is there a decent DVD set out now so we can follow along?

[Reply](#)

- [El Zilcho](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 11:58am

AMC was streaming all the old Prisoner episodes on their website. I'm not sure if they still are. If so, I'm definitely going to follow along. The Prisoner's a relative blind spot for me.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 12:01pm

Definitely. I've recently enjoyed "Darmok" and "The Game" (I'm a sucker for cheesy 80's anti-drug themed episodes - my favorite is "Symbiosis") and the more I search the listings, the more pop out at me. I know I'm getting ahead of myself, with the hiatus and all, but I'd second the requests for some TNG reviews, Zach.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 12:35pm

Maybe he could start from the beginning, but skip episodes based on mutually acceptable, pre-arranged criteria. Examples:

- 1) Skip all Wesley episodes not featuring either the Traveler or that time when Wesley killed all those cadets and covered them up.
- 2) Skip all episodes featuring Luxanna Troi.
- 3) Skip all episodes featuring Tasha Yar's backstory, unless they also feature "relations" with Data.
- 4) Skip all Guinan-centric episodes, unless they take place in the past or the future.
- 5) Skip all references to "Alexander, son of Worf"

Thou shalt not skip:



- 1) Episodes featuring the Borg.
- 2) Episodes featuring Locutus.
- 3) Episodes featuring Locutus and the Borg.
- 4) Episodes featuring time loops.
- 5) Episodes featuring Data as Sherlock Holmes.
- 6) Episodes featuring the "Picard Manuever" (you know what I'm talking about) unless they also feature Luxanna Troi.

Etc.

[Reply](#)

- [Al running with the bulls Gore](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 12:43pm

If you don't mind dropping \$100 for brand new and probably \$50 for used DVDs.

I have it and glad I spent the cash.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 12:55pm

@hercules rockefeller(would be an awesome band name btw)

Prisoner is a groundbreaking series and pretty amazing on a few different levels.

Patrick McGoochan wrote, produced and starred(unheard of back then, Desi Arnez did it all but write I believe). The show subverted the secret agent craze that was the hot genre of the 60s.

It's a sequel of sorts to Danger Man(Secret Agent Man in the US I think) where McGoochan quits the secret service and is sent to a prison disguised as an island resort. They try to get him to reveal his secrets and he spends his time trying to escape and turning his captors against each other. I'm oversimplifying the very cerebral, thinking man's spy/scifi angle to the show, lot of themes about identity and free will throughout the one season it was on.

Fucking brilliant and ahead of its time, we wouldn't have stuff like Lost without the Prisoner.

One of the snappiest theme songs ever too, on my ipod forever.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 1:08pm

You want suffering and blood sacrifice? Have him review Star Trek V.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 1:10pm

The Prisoner is great (and a lot of fun) but you sort of need to write off the last episode. It sucks, but there it is.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 1:49pm

Third.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 2:05pm

@ Pizza - OK, you've got me intrigued. I'll try to follow along via netflix, as time allows.

On the bright side, the hiatus at least gives me an excuse to delete "The Way to Eden" from my DVR. It's been festering there for weeks.

[Reply](#)

- [Jayzor](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 2:25pm

I've enjoyed the TOS reviews. Looking forward to you picking them up again in December. Hopefully, I'll have caught up with my viewings by then, I'm just finishing up season 1. I'll also add my votes for TNG, haven't really watched it since the mid-90s heyday and my interest in it was also peaked by Wil Wheaton's blog and publishing a book recapping the first season.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 3:04pm

I'd read a TNG review. Lots of really great episodes there to revisit. Although I'm probably one of the minority that would vote for skipping some of the Data-centric ones - they really seemed to make him the central character for some of the best and worst TNG episodes ever. I concede I never had quite the universal love for this character others seemed to have, possibly because when the series released he was obviously the substitute Spock, and Spock is/was my favorite Trek character of all. But I do think they spent way too much time thinking up of clever "he's almost human!" stories, especially in the later stages of the series, and I got sick of them.

Although the concept of Data as human/sentient also resulted in one of my undergrad professors showing the episode "Measure of a Man" in philosophy class. That and my Judiasm and Islam professor showing the X-Files ep with the Jewish Golum remain two of the highlights of my undergrad class-taking experiences.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 4:10pm

"Oy, we wants it."  
(Not the exact misspelling, but hey...)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 5:55pm

Thirdded...

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 6:33pm

amc.com@Herc Rock and all: I think has The Prisoner free streaming episodes if you don't wanna netflix it. Ain't the modern age grand?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 6:57pm

@Zack - Not a bad idea to take a break before tackling Season 3. And thanks for ending Season 2 with this review - it's one of your best so far.

The Prisoner? Absolutely!! Folks, if you haven't seen it and don't take this as an opportunity to watch, you're going to miss out. Only 17 episodes, too, so it doesn't wear out its welcome. This is gonna be cool.

[Reply](#)

- [Persia](#)Prole Hole  
8/20/09 8:33pm

They are still showing it on AMC, and yay! I can't wait.

[Reply](#)

- [miles\\_underground](#)Prole Hole  
8/21/09 3:10am

I'd never heard of the Prisoner when I caught half an episode one morning on Scifi, when it was still a new channel. It piqued my interest, and then when it ended there was Harlan Ellison (someone I was not familiar with, other than knowing he was a writer) saying that it was the third ep in The Prisoner marathon. I put a blank tape in the VCR, and fifteen hours later I had most of the series— with Ellison's intros and asides— on 3 SLP tapes.

That show blew my goddamned mind. I eventually got the series on VHS and gave my pirated tapes away, and honestly I haven't watched the show in maybe 7 years. (Although I got a kick out of The Simpson's episode.) The show was such a huge part of my adolescence, I'm a little nervous about revisiting it.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Prole Hole  
8/21/09 7:52am

@Loose Stool - the final episode really isn't that bad - it pissed a lot of people off at the time it was broadcast because it didn't give any clear, definitive answers to a lot of the questions raised, and a lot of the underlying philosophy of the series wasn't ever confirmed or denied but left up to the viewer to decide. You can either see that as a strength of the show, granting the viewers the intelligence to make up their own mind, or a weakness of the script in not addressing all the points the show raised, depending on what side of the fence you sit on (I'm for the first option).

Wait, this is the Battlestar Galactica thread, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Banou](#)Prole Hole  
8/21/09 10:02am

I was not a big fan of The Prisoner's final episode. This had less to do with expecting big answers (I would have been happy leaving things ambiguous) and more to do with the overly psychedelic, metaphor-becomes-literal tone of it. It went from a mysterious series with fantastic elements, to pure fantasy.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Prole Hole  
8/21/09 2:41pm

I too am bummed about the ST hiatus, but I look forward to The Prisoner, having seen it last in its original run!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Prole Hole  
8/21/09 5:45pm

@PH:

Hilarious! i was thinking the same thing about what you were saying about the last episode of The Prisoner... Wait, that could be BSG!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole

8/24/09 5:16pm

So I read elsewhere that the order of the eps on the DVD are not the same as the broadcast order (for The Prisoner). Anyone know which is the first Ep with which to start?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Prole Hole

8/24/09 5:32pm

Never mind, I figured it out, at least for the first episode (who'd have thunk it that it would be "Arrival"

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Chartex](#)Zack Handlen

8/20/09 10:59am

Perfectly Good Odd-Numbered TREK Movie

I always thought SEARCH got a bum rap. It's probably the \*breeziest\* space-adventure movie I can think of, and that's fine with me. I did always wish they had set it a little further apart from WRATH, time-wise; as it stands, Spocks great big heroic demise pretty much just inconveniences the crew for a few days, and then it's all fine again. Still — Reverend Jim Ignatowski as a Klingon? That's gold. I also love the super-low-tech vectorgraphics-based dogfighting videogame they're playing in the bar.

One big demerit, though — I always find myself wishing that KIrK didn't spend most of SEARCH and all of VOYAGE wearing a purple body-stocking. An unfortunate side-effect of the 80s, I guess.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Chartex

8/20/09 11:13am

One thing I really do like is the length of time between ST:III and ST:VI, I really like the fact that it's made clear they have been on Vulcan for a few weeks and Spock has GRADUALLY been getting back to his old self. It really gives a nice feeling that what happened had an impact and takes times to resolve (in stark contrast to Picard suddenly being back to work at the end of Best of Both Worlds, for example). It would have been very easy for them to just start ST:IV with them flying back to Earth, and I really appreciate that they took a moment to pause and show (not tell) what was going on there.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Chartex

8/20/09 11:18am

I'll agree with you on both STIII getting a bad rap and the weird purple body suit thing Shatner wears. The entire Stealing the Enterprise scene is a lot of fun to watch, and I enjoy the hammy fight in the end.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Chartex

8/20/09 11:24am

Plus, the destruction of the Enterprise. Right now for us, it's not too big of a deal- we know they make a new one, plus several more afterwards. But back then it was something- the ship that was the mainstay for the show's run plus two movies was destroyed, by Kirk himself.

I've read that even though Paramount put footage of the Enterprise's destruction in some of the trailers (which irked off Nimoy), the audience was still pretty shocked when that happened. How many times in TOS and the movies did the Enterprise face certain doom, only to narrowly edge out?

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 11:28am

These two, while perhaps not the "best" Trek movies in terms of plot or serious emotion, are two of the most rewatchable and FUN. The best Trek movie run was movies 2-4: all enjoyable (though for different reasons) and I actually enjoyed the continuity of the sequels picking up right where the previous movie left off. Sadly, they followed Voyage Home with the drek that was V: The Movie That Shall Not Be Named, but if you grew up watching TOS on TV in the 80s, seeing these in the theatre or watching them hilariously edited for TV was just awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 11:39am

Prole Hole: "(in stark contrast to Picard suddenly being back to work at the end of Best of Both Worlds, for example)"

Actually, the episode following BoBW, "Home", is devoted to Picard dealing with the trauma. It's the only episode of TNG without a skiffy gimmick.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 11:45am

One beef I had with TSFS is Saavik - I think we can all agree that Kirstie Alley would've been a huge improvement over Robin Curtis. And if Alley'd have stuck with the character, I'd wager that Saavik would've filled Valeris's role in TUC, another upgrade IMO.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 11:48am

Picard didn't really get right back to captain of the ship at the end of "Best of Both Worlds." There was that episode where they returned to Earth and he convalesced for a bit on the family vinyard.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 12:00pm

@ alurin - You're right of course, the ep following it tries to deal with the ramifications of BoBW but BoBW itself doesnt give any impression of time passed, so it just never seems very convincing to me. Patrick Stewart doesn't seem to be giving it his all, and what with the surfeit of French cliches in evidence, it all falls a bit flat, I just meant that ST:IV gives a much better sense of it.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 12:01pm

I was never ga ga over Kirstie Alley, whether in Cheers or otherwise, but she did give Saavik a sensuality totally missed by Curtis.

Also, I think earlier drafts of IV had Saavik in a more important role and they decided she wasn't worth keeping.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 12:41pm

Unfortunately, neither Alley nor Catrall made particularly good Vulcans. Doesn't Saavik cry at the end of II? Robin Curtis may be a bit wooden, but that's kinda the point. The reality is Curtis just wasn't hot enough.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 2:30pm

Saavik is half-romulan though, which is why she cries (also, remember that vulcans have very intense emotions, they just choose to subjugate them with logic. Even the best falter at times, as we see with Sarek in TSFS). Saavik's romulan heritage would fit her participation in the conspiracy (and possibly explains why the Romulan ambassador was involved) in TWOK she seems to struggle a bit with her emotions (the crying, the "Damn" during the Kobayashi Maru), and with the practical application of logic (the discussion re lying with Spock). In TSFS, she's held hostage by Klingons as they kill a friend in cold blood. It's very plausible that she would logically conclude that the ends justify the means and that she was saving the federation from a disastrous alliance with the Klingons

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 2:46pm

For anyone geeky enough to have gotten into Star Trek literature (and oh, yes, was I that geeky), one of the best fics I ever read involved Saavik's back story (or that authors version of it). It involved a Romulan plot to release a doomsday device that destroyed all the oxygen in the air and some seriously cool Vulcan/Romulan stuff. It's called "The Pandora Principle", and I highly recommend it to anyone who actually reads ST fic.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 3:13pm

"literature"

Classic.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 3:16pm

That's right, goddammit, for a 12 year old it was pretty serious literature.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 3:25pm

When I was 12, I was reading Milton and Melville, but I'd bet I've read more Star Trek books than you.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 4:03pm

But getting back to the earlier thread- is there something in II that says Saavik is half-Romulan? Where did that come from?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 5:39pm

I think Mark Lenard is THE Vulcan, even more so than Spock. He was always "acting" logically, but you could see on his face that there was stuff boiling over beneath.

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Chartex  
8/20/09 7:15pm

It'd been years since I watched either of these, so I was a little surprised by how much of the dialog I still knew verbatim. I think I watched them /a lot/ when I was younger. Also, this is the first time I've not teared up when they blow up the Enterprise. When I was a kid, I had a desktop image of the scene where they're standing on the cliff watching it burn up. It was an original piece of art (not by me) done in MS Paint or some such. Tried to Google it just now, but had not luck.

Also, regarding Valaris (sort of) I heard a story once about Kim Cattral getting caught doing a nude photo shoot on the bridge set during production. As I understand it, the film was seized and destroyed.

[Reply](#)

- [Ian Orr](#)Chartex  
8/21/09 9:24am

Star Trek 3 is easily the best Odd numbered Trek Film if only (though not only) for the Classic Kirk Bones exchange after Kirk destroys the Enterprise.

[Reply](#)

- [Banou](#)Chartex  
8/21/09 10:27am

The good thing about 3 (and even more so, 4) is that they don't rely on the tired "obsessed tragic villain with superweapon threatens planet, Enterprise only ship that can stop him, big space battle at end" plot that has become the one and only template with recent Trek films. Well, I suppose Doc Brown was trying to become that villain, if he actually got his hands on Genesis.

And kudos to JJ Abrams, I guess, for making a pretty good Trek film despite relying on a lot of very, very tired plot devices. But next time, maybe try something different.

[Reply](#)

- [Sweet MAGA tears take me to divine planes of nirvanic existence](#)Prole Hole  
12/19/20 4:36am

Wow- so I'm replying 11 years later. Fascinating, as they say. Oh btw great point. Can't tell you how many times other TV series have intentionally glossed right over plot points like that and it shows. Storytelling suffers, imo, when that happens. There's far too much telling and not enough showing in many series and they pass right over important parts that wouldn't take much effort to flesh out and briefly show (currently ST: Discovery is really bad at this IMO but they certainly aren't alone. It's as old as the medium of TV and film.) So I'm with you. When they do actually show these important connector scenes and are willing to show at least some traces of ongoing continuity and more-than-one-episode-effects, I really appreciate it as a viewer.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Sweet MAGA tears take me to divine planes of nirvanic existence  
12/19/20 9:23am

Thanks for replying eleven years later. Time is relative, and all that! If you're deeply interested in my takes on Star Trek movies, they're all here.

Prole Hole vs Star Trek Cinematic Universe(s)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

8/20/09 11:05am

And the other thing...

Zack caught that always really bugged me was the "security footage" and the Enterprise blowing up footage. I mean really.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 11:10am

I have to say though, for the mid-80s, the actual special effect of the Enterpride being destroyed is really rather good, and it's a nice (and serious!) moment in a film otherwise fairly bereft of them. It's repetition in ST:IV is ludicrous, but still... nice effect.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 11:16am

Actually, I think one of the reasons I was so disappointed in all the TNG movies is that the special effects seemed way too computer generated and tv-showish. In contrast the TOS movies seemed to be done with a lot of models which, to me, looked more realistic, especially in the battle scenes, etc.

Of course, the earlier movies suffer greatly from the computer animation used for the bridge screens, etc (although the Genesis planet transformation bit in II was pretty great for the time and done by ILM)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 11:20am

That always bothered me too. You can do the whole sci-fi "they have computers that can reenact it" thing for the Enterprise going kablooie, but it's still a cop out.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 11:32am

I've always had a problem with Star Trek's use of visuals. It's like they shoot a little invisible camera out into space so they can catch video of a space fight or an explosion or something from a distance away. Ridiculous, though I do understand why they do it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 11:57am

That reminds me of the tactical display in star trek II (when Kirk gets back on the Enterprise and Spock is updating them on the situation between them and the Reliant) previously the Enterprise was hiding from the Reliant by orbiting the other side of Regulus, but now they can pull up a display from an entirely different perspective? why didn't Khan do the same thing (he read all of the Enterprises technical manuals before, and presumably did the same thing on the Reliant, so if there's some magic way to access this perspective, surely he'd have figured it out)?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)john barleycorn must diet

8/20/09 12:48pm

WoK can be a head scratcher, at times. Why doesn't Kirk take the time to let the people stranded inside Regulus know that...uh...they're not really stranded there for the remainder of our lives?



"Surprise, ship was on the the way the entire time. Didn't I mention that?"

What a dick Kirk can be.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 12:52pm

(Am I the official Tortured Rationalizations To Cover Script Problems guy here, or just filling in ad hoc? You decide.)

Remember that the Feds — and presumably others — have bunches of unmanned "deep space listening posts" scattered around their territory which are occasionally dragged into service for plot-manufacturing purposes. In an interstellar civilization you've gotta assume those things have phenomenal range and acuity to be of any use, so it's not inconceivable that one of them managed to pick up the destruction of the Enterprise, thus providing that oh-so-c0nvenient footage.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:34pm

I'll lend a hand, as a fellow fanboy apologist - given that the mutara sector was a highly restricted area, perhaps starfleet had deployed additional sensors in that area. Of course, if that were the case, they would've sent a flagship along with the reliant for defense...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:44pm

Trek has always out-Rashomoned Rashomon on the different perspectives thing. I agree that the footage in TVH is egregious, but there are so many examples on the show of replying things with the original cuts in them, as if the monitors not only have multi-angles, but camera people to make sure it's aesthetically pleasing.

Suspension of disbelief indeed; My suspenders are somewhere above the stratosphere by now. And don't ask about my testes...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:46pm

Oh, that's enough, both of you. This can't be explained away no matter how you try.

Now, the Tactical view, I always sort of assumed was just a computer representation of what things would look like from another angle based on sensor data and not actual photography of the two vessels in space. This makes sense. The mysterious Federation camera that captures ships blowing up does not.

And to PROVE it does not make any sense, the whole point about II was Kirk's race to Regulus because he didn't know what was going on ("Who's taking Genesis? No one...no one's taking Genesis.") If he could have just turned on the TV and seen what was happening he wouldn't have been in the dark when he arrived.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 3:11pm

But how could sensor data know where the Reliant was if Regulus is solid enough for the Enterprise to hide behind?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 3:58pm

I'll give it a try:

Khan doesn't know where Kirk is, so he doesn't realize Enterprise is hiding behind Regulus. Enterprise DOES know where Reliant is, and is hiding from it on the other side of the planet. The planet is round, therefore, there is only a small space to hide behind (basically, exactly 1/2 the way around). Thus, if Enterprise CAN'T see Reliant, it knows exactly where it is (in the hidden spot).

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 4:08pm

That's an interesting theory, but it doesn't seem like the tactical display is showing a logical guess as to the location of the Reliant, but rather a specific location and speed (Spock mentions "she can still outrun us").

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 4:46pm

Well, I don't want to spend all day defending this, but under my theory, her location would have to be 1/2 way round the planet and speed would have to equal the Enterprise's speed, which would be some sort of orbiting speed and not full impulse). The dialogue you quote could be read to acknowledge that Enterprise can't just hide behind the planet forever and once they break out of orbit Reliant is the faster (newer? less damaged?) ship. Thus- break orbit and head straight for the Mutara Nebula where Reliant would have to slow down, shields would be useless, visuals would be bad and their intelligent but inexperienced foe would instigate a search pattern based on two dimensional thinking that would allow Enterprise to drop below Reliant, let it pass, and then surprise them with a torpedo aft.

So there.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 6:12pm

Now, objection, Your Honor. Kirk not being able to "turn on a TV" and examine what's going on in a sector where some super-secret research is taking place doesn't necessarily invalidate the idea that a deep space probe is indeed monitoring that sector. Presumably you've at least gotta have the proper clearances to get access to surveillance data, and maybe it's not available in real time. Even for a Starfleet Captain in the 23rd century it's surely not as simple as putting up an antenna and grabbing some unsecured wi-fi.

So how do the Klingons get hold of it to use as evidence against Kirk? Well, if it's an interstellar incident, they may have very well demanded access to any Federation data involving the theft of Kruger's ship on pain of something nasty, and the Federation diplomatic corps may have come across with it. Or they could have bribed some unscrupulous uberhacker and obtained it that way; Klingon espionage isn't a contradiction in terms in TOS, so there are ways. Heck, if it's close enough to their border, one of the Klingons' own long-range listening posts may have picked up the evidence they produce.

(My reed may be feeble, but it can bear \*that\* much weight, at least!)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 11:28pm

JBMD - I'm just giving you a hard time anyway. I've no problem suspending disbelief, but that was just one that nags at me anytime I see it. They ought to just call tactical view "plot exposition view"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/21/09 10:23am

I like that.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/21/09 5:38pm

I'm all for literal-naming of devices rather than babble-techno-speak....

Try emptying the powerful-sounding thing-device in order to bake something on their ship that light stop them from attacking us!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 10:37am

oh what a nerd was I

In high school I once wrote an essay comparing Thomas More's Utopia with Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home. I contrasted 20th-Century Earth as a dystopia with 24th-Century UFP Earth. It was actually a pretty good essay and it garnered an A.

[Reply](#)

- [Jorge Von Salsa](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 10:47am

I shirked an analytical assignment on The Sufferings of Young Werther for my love and philosophy class by writing a script that featured Jenna Elfman as the Angel of Love from Can't Hardly Wait.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 11:12am

I read the Star Wars novelization—that's right, A NEW HOPE, suckas—for a book report. Got an A by exploring the increased thematic depth communicated through the many scenes unique to the book.

Turns out you really can bullshit your way through high school English.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 11:37am

That's when you know your english teacher's thrown in the towel...

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 11:37am

My senior year they started up a new standardized test in Illinois, the PSAT. I was so pissed off that for our essay I wrote how civilization would fall if fast food joints went out of business. I got a pretty damn good score- nearly the best I think. Now that I'm a teacher I can realize why- reading score after score of boring essays, something like that snaps you awake and gives you a good chuckle.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 12:04pm

For an advanced-level Latin class, I once translated a section of Ovid's Metamorphoses in the style of Edward Gorey. With some of Gorey's own illustrations cut-and-pasted in. What prize do I get?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 12:07pm

Spindle-

I'm guessing you won a job in the cubicle trades.

So what prize do I win?

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 12:19pm

That is so accurate that I'm dying a little inside.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 12:28pm

My bad!

Sorry!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 12:33pm

In middle school, I read the novelization of The Sword and the Sorceress. Nadir of my literary life. Never wrote a book report on it, but I bet I could've mined the symbolic undertones of that tri-bladed sword.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 1:18pm

Sad to say, I know exactly what sword you are talking about.

Hey, did they tell any more about it in the novelization?

[Reply](#)

- [Jorge Von Salsa](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 2:01pm

My most balls-garbage high school report moment was in junior year health class when we had to deliver an oral presentation on a disease or affliction. I chose lycanthropy.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
8/20/09 2:17pm

The worst I've actually submitted was a paper touting the novel "Planet of the Apes" as more or less the most inspiring thing I had ever read, but I always thought there was potential for a serious comparison of Milton's Paradise Lost with Star Trek: Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

8/20/09 2:49pm

Inspiring in what way, exactly? In that if the world is destroyed by nuclear fire, we humans can survive as slaves to other primates?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

8/20/09 3:06pm

Basically my argument was that it is a wake up call for us all to be curious and innovative, daring to live lives of importance. Refusing to be content with a comfortable status quo is the only safeguard against our culture's stagnation and overthrow by lower animals. (Much of this was stuff that was in the novel, but not the movie. Fun fact, the author Pierre Boulle also wrote the novel "The Bridge Over the River Kwai," and was awarded an Oscar for best screenplay despite not speaking a word of English.) The nature of the paper was due more to an impending deadline than to any genuine belief that "Planet of the Apes" was a landmark in Western philosophy.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

8/20/09 3:26pm

Actually, they described it in incredible detail, and how the maker had spring loaded the shooting blades. It was no Glaive, but fuck...I wanted one.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you

8/21/09 6:43am

I wrote a book report on the influence of gin in 1984, while drunk on gin for the first time in my life; IT was incomplete, complete with an imprint of my face on it where I passed out writing it (at the last minute, natch), but the teacher thought I was making some wry, post-modern joke so gave me an 'A' and a warning to stay on-topic. True story, though I've never liked gin much. Too oily....

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [PoseyHipster](#)Zack Handlen

8/20/09 10:44am

You Klingon Bastard,  
You killed my son!

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)PoseyHipster

8/20/09 11:01am

I! [kick] Have Had! [kick] Enough! [kick] Of! [kick] YOU! [kick]

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)PoseyHipster

8/20/09 11:03am

I agree with what Zach says, the two nearly identical roles show of Khan and Kruge really show the difference between a good actor who can keep control while going a bit over the top and an a rather less good one hamming it up for all he's worth. Christopher Lloyd is perfectly entertaining in his role (and I'm not sure William Shatner has ever sounded more Shatnerian than, "I...have had enough...of you!"), but he's definitely no Ricardo.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 11:18am

I didn't get into this in the review, but I love how quickly David is elided over; Kirk is moderately upset when gets the news, but by the fourth movie, all we get is a quick, "He died bravely," and nobody mentions it again. I can understand that David wasn't exactly an essential part of the universe, but the fact that he gets used as part of Kirk's motivation in the sixth movie makes Voyage and Search's eagerness to basically ret-con him out of existence hilarious.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 11:29am

Clearly he was a difficult kid for either Kirk or the audience to care about. Was ANYBODY sorry that he got knifed by Doc Brown?

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 11:30am

Thank you!

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 11:38am

He does get a brief mention in STVI, but that's about it. Poor David- they couldn't just let him live out his life in obscurity.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 12:37pm

I think you're being a bit unfair to Shatner's performance in III. The "Klingons bastards" bit where he misses his chair gets me every time. He looks pretty devastated...not dying Spock devastated, but he's only known Square Pegs for a few weeks.

And back off the Kruge. Guy was basically the template for every Klingon that followed him.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 12:44pm

The missing his chair bit was awfully good. Although, it pales to the browmop he does in II while saying "I did NOTHING. Just got caught with my britches down."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)PoseyHipster  
8/20/09 2:58pm

"Anybody here order a dead nephew?"

And good riddance to that sweater-tying, hand-wringing excuse for a son, David. I'd ahve shot him myself If I'd been able...

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)PoseyHipster

8/20/09 3:31pm

"...got knifed by Doc Brown?"

I think of it as getting shivved for some dope by Jim Ignatowski.

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)PoseyHipster

8/20/09 3:35pm

Scotty, in his grief, must've hit the wrong button. Seriously, Scotty, could you not bring bloody corpses to the bridge? It's bad enough you and the Doctor are up here half the time fucking off when you should be at your duty station.

As far as David, he died a good, honest Kirk family death, which is better than falling off a bridge... platform... thing. Alone... except for the bald dude from the future, he doesn't count. Anyway, if I got to choose my own way to go, death by Klingon dagger would be in the top five.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)PoseyHipster

8/20/09 5:40pm

Wasn't it a clone or something? I've read a lot of Trek, but I've got thrown out of the Shatniverse after about 50 pages of the Return and never went back.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)PoseyHipster

8/21/09 8:05am

@ Master Plaster Blaster Caster: "the bald dude from the future" - that could be either one of them.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)PoseyHipster

8/21/09 2:46pm

This is horrible to say, since I'm generally a compassionate, huggy type, but I always got the feeling that Kirk was kind of relieved the little git was dead. He didn't know what to do with David.

[Reply](#)

- [Squirrels](#)PoseyHipster

8/21/09 8:39pm

The "I lost a brother once" line always bugged me. Kirk apparently forgot he did once find his actual brother dead on the floor.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)PoseyHipster

8/22/09 1:10pm

This is the third time I have come across the word 'elided' this week. Second time on the AV Club.

Did you guys just read the fourth Dresden also?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

8/20/09 11:22am

Awesome Kirk moment in III:

Excelsior Captain: "Kirk, if you do this, you'll never sit in the captain's chair again."

Kirk: "Warp speed."

The first half of the movie was great, after they stole the Enterprise is kinda fizzled out. Chekov got screwed in the wardrobe dept. too. What's up with that schoolboy collar?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 11:26am

So, how about a word regarding James B. Sicking, i.e. Excelsior's Captain. Going back to our discussions of Captain Tracey or Commodore Wesley, one of the things TOS did was try to make all the starfleet captains pretty spectacular (like JJ did with Pike and that other guy who got killed right at the beginning). Did it bother anyone that in this instance they made the other captain seem like a really douche?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 11:33am

He had a swagger stick. How is that not douche?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 11:39am

Brigadier Alastair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 11:41am

Nerd alert: some of the authors for Star Trek books picked up on his sort-of douchiness, especially towards Kirk, and gave the explanation that they were Starfleet Academy rivals. Sort of the 24th century to rival high school quarterbacks, I suppose. Still, I agree with PM- he was doing what he was trained to do.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 11:50am

Prole-

Would it be out of line to think that the entire Doctor Who series is a bit douche? Or maybe it's the British Empire in general.

I don't mean to offend, really I don't, but there is such an air of officiousness to British military service and customs. I think a compelling argument could be made that Alec Guinness a la Bridge over the River Kwai is pretty douche.

Unlike, say, Kirk and Pike, those models of American bravado and masculinity. You know who would make a good starship captain? Steve fucking McQueen.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 12:08pm

He was lying in bed filing his nails with a pink emery board. That registers extremely high on the Douch-O-Meter.



[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 12:28pm

Kirk uses a bench grinder for all his personal grooming.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 12:51pm

He's better than that Harriman douche in Generations. At least Excelsior guy has a pair.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 1:36pm

Double agreed.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 2:27pm

If anyone asks what happened to the Enterprise B, just tell them Captain Harriman pushed it out the back of the garage because his dad loved it more than him.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 2:36pm

Spindle, not only was he lying in bed polishing his nail, he even keeps his douche stick right there on his nightstand, ready for douchebaggery at a moment's notice.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/20/09 6:37pm

@JBMD: Steve McQueen as a starship captain is brilliant. Driven mad by an incident years ago when half his crew was absorbed by some alien blob.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/21/09 8:24am

@ john barleycorn must diet - probably too late for you to read this but oh well I'll give it a go! There MAY be an argument, but I'd say most military personnel rather than just British military personnel. We have to remember that technically Starfleet isn't just the futuristic equivalent of the army, its mission is much more broad, and thus the officers that serve in it aren't directly analogous to contemporary military personnel.

Still, the Brigadier is just a bit stiff, he's not a douche. And I will defend Doctor Who till the day I die. The day I die, I tell you! I will agree however that, as a subject of Her Britannic Majesty's United Kingdom and Commonwealth, that the British Empire is indeed douchy, which is partly why I don't live in it any more.

Also, you know who else would make a great TOS-era starship captain? Mid-Bond period Sean Connery. Seriously. Go watch Thunderball and tell me if he wouldn't make an awesome TOS-style half-barking-mad captain.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
8/21/09 10:25am

Sean Connery kinda did that bit in the Hunt for Red October. But with a russian accent.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 12:11pm

They just invented transparent aluminum about a week ago  
So the future is upon us.

ST:III is a movie I go back and forth on. It's not a terribly ambitious film and it doesn't really add much to the mythology—as Zack said, it mostly takes some of the new accretions from Wrath of Khan away. Still, I think that it works on an emotional level, and there are some really great scenes in there—the "stealing the enterprise" sequence really works, and it's one of the more exciting scenes that the original series of movies came up with. And there's the self-destruct sequence ("NOOOOOOOOOOOO! GET OUT OF THERE!") that's pretty great as well. It actually was pretty shocking to see the Enterprise get blown up—it was almost a character in the show and the movies, and it was handled well in the film. Compare this with Star Trek: Generations, where the Enterprise-D was basically destroyed by a plot hole and a desire to design a new, cool-looking Enterprise. (And, BTW, I liked James Sikking as the Captain of the Excelsior—kind of wish they'd brought him back, because he was exactly the right sort of annoying and acerbic to make a good foil with Kirk. He was also pretty good in Outland as well.)

The Voyage Home doesn't really make sense, and that whole "time travel by shooting round the sun" concept pretty much gets dropped from the Star Trek canon after this movie. But the stuff in San Francisco is good fun, and it does feel pretty 80s. I hear that Walter Koenig generally refuses to do his "nuclear wessels" thing for fans, which is too bad because it's the biggest highlight of the movie. I didn't care at all about the future story—it was basically just a framing story for the 80s stuff. Zach is pretty right about Star Trek recycling plots (Voyager basically redid this episode, only set in Los Angeles, if I recall correctly), but as with sports, it's all been seen before and the joy is in seeing new permutations of stuff you already love. Only Deep Space Nine tried to tell some different kinds of Star Trek stories once the Dominion War started in earnest, and much of the rest of it is repetitive (Enterprise struck me as being particularly heinous on this score—I watched the episodes on the "Altered Realities" set and I could easily spot their antecedents, e.g. "Hey, that's just The Visitor!")

I'm looking forward to discussing The Final Frontier, which I'm more charitable to than most. It's bad, but it's not boring, and there are some exciting scenes in there. And it wasn't really Shatner's fault for it being bad: the problems for that movie are all in the screenplay.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 1:15pm

It's like Zack said. ST IV almost dares you not to like it. It's a full scale cuteness offensive. It's a fun movie, but the more you think about it, the less impressive it becomes.

And I'm all for discussing ST V if it bring us closer to discussing ST VI.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 2:09pm

I quite agree with your props for Sikking. He's always value added.

As for Trek repeating itself, of course it does. There are only seven stories in the world, and I defy you to find any series of -hundreds of stories that don't repeat themselves. If we keep coming back, it's because we like that brand of story.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 2:22pm

To be clear, I like Sikking as well, on HSB, Outland and in this movie. I'm just saying that I don't like the direction the movies took with making all the other Starfleet Captains look like boobs. If Sikking was, say some bureaucrat or like director of the space station or something, I would have been fine with it. But a Starship Captain? Bad form.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 3:08pm

Are you serious about the transparent aluminum? So pretty soon we're going to see Coke in cans so we know about how much we have left? 'Cuz that's hellra rad.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatte](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 7:46pm

I always loved Checkov standing around on a street corner in San Francisco, asking everyone where the "nuclear wessels" are. By itself, it's pretty damned funny, then you add in the fact that the cold war was still on and it gets funnier. And that all those people were just passerbys and didn't know they were filming a movie, including the lady who says, "Hmm, I don't know if I know the answer to that one."

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 10:30pm

If you really love the San Fran parts of STIV, all of that was written by Nicholas Meyer (starting with "According to the pollution content of the atmosphere, I believe we have arrived at the latter half of the 20th century."

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Eponymous  
8/20/09 11:31pm

Skip, what really sells the scene is the cop. he's just standing there biding his time, trying to decide whether or not it's time to kick this crazy russkie's ass.

[Reply](#)

- [Evan Waters](#)Eponymous  
8/21/09 4:05pm

Meyer's fingerprints are probably most visible in the exchange about Jacqueline Suzann and Harold Robbins being regarded as literary giants.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Eponymous  
8/22/09 3:08pm

One great thing about Sikking's role is that the film was shot during the original run of Hill Street Blues, so fans of the show (like me) could see his three minutes on screen and suddenly imagine what sort of starship captain Lieutenant Howard Hunter might be.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 1:58pm

Trek Indoctrination Update

In my ongoing effort to convert my French girlfriend into a Trekkie, I started with Wrath of Khan in the films, then doubled back for the first one and then Search for Spock and Voyage... And that's it. Talk about a gateway drug! She hated TVH so much (with no help from me, though I also hate it. I told her it was the 'one everyone loves') that she no longer wants to see the films.

Is this a good sign or not?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 2:06pm

I've dated both sides of the aisle, if you know what I mean.

No, wait, what I mean to say is that I have had girlfriends that like Trek and those that don't. I don't think you can teach it, or train for it; either you think space and explosions are cool and don't mind a little 60s cheese and you're in, or you don't and you're out.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 2:29pm

Get her to watch at least The Undiscovered Country. If she still hates it from there, hope is lost.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 2:30pm

I think I love your gf.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 2:59pm

Wait, there are other girls that like Star Trek?

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 4:19pm

While containing lots of cheese, TVH is short on both space and explosions, so I don't think of it as terribly representative of Star Trek. I didn't really like it that much the first time I saw it (it was the second Star Trek-related thing I ever saw), because at that time I didn't love the characters as much as I do now. It has grown on me, but I actually like III better, if only because Uhura gets to kick ass for a brief shining moment.

DCRJ - here's one!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 5:36pm

I think it was a case of "too soon", Rich. Whatever else The Voyage Home is, it's mostly a love letter to the /characters/ on the show rather than the show's milieu or raison d'etre.

If your relationship with Trek is not yet in a place where it's Really Freaking Cool that the film's climax is Scotty yelling, "Captain! There be whales here!" then IMO the whole movie is going to fall flat. As a film, it's very much a victory lap — and victory laps come off very poorly to an audience who feels they are undeserved.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 5:46pm

Good point, Ajax. IV was meant to be a feel good movie, in the sense that it was meant for the fans to "feel good." I really don't think Nimoy was trying to sell out the franchise or dumb it down or widen the base or anything, but just tell a pleasant story after the sorrows of II and III.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/21/09 6:21am

Evil Spock, you give us all hope!

Actually, she's quite into 'Enterprise', liked 'Space Seed' from TOS and watched a few DS9, but she started getting all the aliens mixed up and risked overload.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/21/09 9:10am

Hey, my b/f is of the non Trek variety as well. Other than forcing him to sit through the reboot (and he was bored but otherwise bore his lot stoically), I have no plans on trying to convert him. He's not a huge TV watcher in general.

He is, however, somewhat geeky, just not scifi geeky. He's definitely cooler than I am. I'm comfortable with that.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/25/09 2:57pm

I need to find a Trek-loving girl. And then we can get to some Vulcan Pelvic-Melding.

[Reply](#)

- Hide replies
- [Magnet Man](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 11:06am

Missing Something

No mention of John Larroquette as one of the Klingons in Search for Spock?

Cause he was totally one of the Klingons in Search for Spock.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:11am

I believe he was "Maltz".

(Why isn't my brain full of useful info, like stock tips or something?)

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:32am

Wow, my brain just burped up the scene with Llyod saying something like, "Maltz...cho-e chew!" into his communicator. I think that was the command to energize or something. I think I need to reacquaint myself with the old Trek movies.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:41am

Maltz was always one of my favorites. I remeber playing star trek as a kid, yelling into my pretend klingon communicator Maltz! Choo E Chuu! and for some reason Kirk's "fine, we'll kill you later" reply to Maltz always made me laugh.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:50am

Maltz! Choi CHU!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:51am

Soylent's got it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 12:03pm

yes - much better. Wasn't quite sure how to spell it.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 1:41pm

Being a 38-year-old virgin who went to Klingon language camp helps.

Not really. But the line was something like that. I think in the subtitles it read, "Maltz — activate beam!"

I always likee how Kirk aped it to get beamed up to the Bird of Prey, only to find that his crew had already kicked Larquette's Klingon ass and taken over the ship.

[Reply](#)

- [Evan Waters](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 2:34pm

"I do not deserve to live."

"Fine. I'll kill you later."

-Later-

"You said you would kill me!"

"I lied."

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 2:40pm

The only polite respons do 'Malz, Choo EE Chew!' is, of course, Gesundheit, or God bless you.  
My mother din't raise no savages!

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 8:07pm

What became of Maltz anyway? Prison on Vulcan, I guess?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Magnet Man  
8/20/09 11:29pm

in the novelization he commits suicide. but keep in mind there's all sorts of crazy stuff in the novelization, like Saavik and David's drunken post-wake hookup.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 11:12am

Christopher Lloyd doing his best John Lithgow impression

So this one went over my head. Are we talking about 3rd Rock John Lithgow, or Buckaroo Bonzai John Lithgow, or just overacting John Lithgow in general?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 11:29am

Its #1 on my Netflix queue. Gosh, I hope its good!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 11:31am

Hopes + Cliffhanger = Dashed onto rocks of despair

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 11:39am

Lithgow + Stallone = insta death.

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 11:59am

Lloyd + styptic pencil = comedy gold.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 12:55pm

My favorite thing about John Lithgow is what a versatile actor he is. You can see him playing a physicist in The Day After, or an alien in Third Rock From The Sun, but perhaps his crowning achievement is his role in Buckaroo Banzai where he plays...an alien physicist.

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 1:19pm

Come on now, give Lithgow some credit... in World According to Garp he wasn't a scientist or an alien.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 1:20pm

Pre- or post-op tranny?

[Reply](#)

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:38pm

Cliffhanger was an unforgivable piece of crap. If they only stuck with John Long's original story ... Yosemite! Plane with bales of marijuana going down in the High Sierra! Suspiciously suddenly wealthy climbers!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:38pm

He's quite caustic and wonderful in All That Jazz...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:43pm

Sounds like Gargantuan is describing "A Simple Plan". But with Sylvester Stallone.

[Reply](#)

- [Orderic](#)john barleycorn must diet  
8/21/09 9:36am

He looks pretty smokin' in a dress in 'Raising Cain'...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [MOster](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 11:31am

Hiatus

Damn!

I was really looking forward to you covering the one where Abraham Lincoln apologizes for calling Uhura a Negro.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)MOster  
8/20/09 11:34am

I think he said "a charming negress". But Space Lincoln is pretty awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)MOster  
8/20/09 11:54am

He beats the hell out of Space Ghengis Khan.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)MOster  
8/20/09 12:02pm



Actually, didn't he literally beat the hell out of Space Ghengis Khan?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)MOster  
8/20/09 12:56pm

He wrestles with both Genghis Khan and Kahless. Apparently he also sits on a giant throne out in space, like the one in the Lincoln Memorial, but in motherfucking space. Probably has lasers. Don't fuck with Space Lincoln.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)MOster  
8/20/09 2:11pm

I quite like that episode, ever since I were a young'un..

Still, bummer that we're not continuing, hard to believe you'll pick up the thread when all's left are the last films and the third season...

If a job's worth doing...!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 1:07pm

Star Trek IV bought me a soda...

...bought me a soda and tried to molest me in the parking lot.

Yep. YepYep. YEP!

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Lord Running Clam  
8/20/09 1:34pm

All I know... is that... there were rumors... that Kirk was into dating field hockey players.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Lord Running Clam  
8/20/09 1:43pm

So Spock joined. Spock joined the team.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Lord Running Clam  
8/20/09 2:05pm

Elevate me, Scotty!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Lord Running Clam  
8/20/09 2:23pm

Meyer wanted Valeris to be Saavik. Had he gotten his way (and I dearly wish he had), Saavik would have been the traitor.

Oh, and Saavik was originally conceived as half-Romulan.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Lord Running Clam  
8/21/09 6:23am

You know LRC, you may think you love my girlfriend, but I'm starting to think of you as some sort of shadowy twin... Pixies references, same obscure trivia I was going to write, same fave film list, PK Dick reference.... It's getting creepy!!!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Necron-99](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 12:29pm

Hey, I hated both these films.  
I just wanted to get that on record.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Necron-99  
8/20/09 12:37pm

Necron-

I think there's still room for you to get in on the "Top Chef" boards if you hurry. Here, let me get the door for you...

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Necron-99  
8/20/09 1:17pm

Search is tolerable. Voyage sucks.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Necron-99  
8/20/09 2:06pm

Lordy, Lordy, Lord is Right!

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Necron-99  
8/20/09 3:51pm

Don't trust Necron on this one. Fuckin' guy. One minute he saves Weehawk and the next he kills your president.

[Reply](#)

- [BookshopBoy](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 10:28am

The Village

Zach, you should see if AvClub will spring for a plane ticket that'll get you as far as Portmeirion, the actual Welsh village where exteriors for The Prisoner was filmed. It's weird and wonderful, packed with bizarre stucco, strange perspectives and odd latinate colonnades. It's a blast, and even now, you can't visit there without really feeling all Prisoner-y...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)BookshopBoy  
8/20/09 3:01pm

Benn there, and I agree it's well worth a visit...

So is the third season of TOS, btw... Lazybones....

[Reply](#)

- [NaturalBlues](#)BookshopBoy

8/24/09 12:45am

@ BookshopBoy

You meant Prisoner-y in the context of the show, not in the "anally raped in the shower" way, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)BookshopBoy  
8/27/09 11:42am

Given his Selleck-eriffic Avatar, I'm guessing it's the shower....

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 12:18pm

Do you remember...The Drifters...

"The threat of government sanction is never that much of a threat—whatever Kirk's crimes, it's hard to seriously censure someone who's saved the planet before..."

This bit took me back in a flash to the many, many hours I spent in comic book and hobby shops in the mid-'80s, like any self-respecting D&D geek.

One thing I remember chuckling over while standing in line was a couple of WANTED posters somebody produced in (I believe) the interregnum between Star Treks 3 and 4. One of them was for Kirk, presumably because of the offenses perpetrated in Search — the other was for the Doctor of Doctor Who fame. And he knows why!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
8/20/09 2:06pm

Who knows why?

[Reply](#)

- [Master Plaster Blaster Caster](#)Ajax  
8/20/09 3:49pm

He.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Ajax  
8/20/09 5:09pm

Yes he does.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
8/21/09 6:24am

Who does?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
8/21/09 6:25am

Who do?

You do!

What?

Remind me of the child?

What child?  
The child with the power!

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Henry](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 7:06pm

Spock

One smart move in both of these movies was resetting Spock. In the early episodes, he was a lot more alien. Kind of weird and unpredictable and maybe a little dangerous. Later on, he just became the straight man, who was there to shake his head at the humans.

But in IV, he actually seems strange and a little off-putting again. In a good way.

This is also something I liked about the newest movie.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Henry  
8/20/09 8:06pm

Agreed. Spock was really what held that show together, when you think about it. Hardly anyone on the show could act in the early days—Shatner hardly being an exception there—so it was usually Nimoy that had to hold everything together, though DeForrest Kelley was generally solid, too.

While on the topic of the new film, I was impressed that Abrams was smart enough to cast good actors for all the parts and then focus on just a few intensely from the start, which is the inverse of the usual Trek formula of having a weak ensemble but making sure that all your Counselor Troi and your Chakotays get lots of attention in the beginning, before finally finding the 2-3 good characters and building the show around them\*. It took a few seasons before most episodes of TNG were about Worf, Data and Picard, for example. Star Trek (the movie) got out of the gate by focusing on Kirk, Spock and Uhura. Nicely done.

\* Then again, DS9 had a pretty strong cast AND a pretty good stable of supporting talent, but that was the exception that proves the rule.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Henry  
8/21/09 7:28pm

I'll bet that 95% of the time, when you mention Star Trek to someone, the image of Spock is the first thing to pop into their mind (although Picard may have replaced him among die-hards - I'm not much of a fan of TNG myself).

Let's face it, Nimoy was the only really good actor in the original series - he always sold the role as if he believed it and even kept his dignity in the sillier episodes. Kelley, Doohan, and Nichols weren't bad, but the rest were bland to terrible. That being said, no one could have filled Kirk's shoes quite like Shatner, bad hammy acting and all.

[Reply](#)

- [HI-Q](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 11:56am

Machinations of a Possible Future  
When will we invent  
transparent aluminum?  
Get on it, NASA

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)HI-Q  
8/20/09 12:03pm

It was actually invented a few months ago!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)HI-Q  
8/20/09 2:09pm

I'm looking right through it as we speak!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 1:49pm

Giving the Guys a Break

I don't recall if Nimoy wrote Search For Spock, but if not, he's hardly responsible for giving our favourite crew business to do. Either it's in the script or it's not. There are directors who use the script just as a point of departure, but Nimoy is nothing if not a classicist. A "Speak the speech, I pray thee" kinda guy...

This is a mistake that happens all too often when we think of directors as all-powerful authors of their film. Some are. Russ Meyer, for example. The director's job is to realize the screenplay. If he wrote it, that's another can of worms.

Sorry to be pedantic, but this shit bothers me. like saying how well the director used light. Film making is a collaborative process with many 'artists' working together, not one Svengali and a bunch of automatons.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Richelieu Jr  
8/20/09 2:29pm

Harve Bennett wrote it, iirc. Nimoy was directing with a full set of training wheels and so did very little to make the script his own.

[Reply](#)

- [P.G. Roadhouse](#)Zack Handlen  
8/24/09 7:01pm

Where's the Spocklet?

I always thought that since Spock's body had to go through at least one or two Pon Farr's while Saavik was holding him he should've been able to overpower her and knock her up, or at least she would've taken one for the team to keep him calm. Missed opportunity?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)P.G. Roadhouse  
8/25/09 1:38pm

I think its pretty well documented that the intention of III was to have Savvik be impregnated by Spock, but later movies never followed up on it.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 11:00am

Zack

So much ground to cover here, but let me start by saying how incredibly well done the first three paragraphs of this are. I've been thinking this week about III and my own feelings about it, and its weaknesses, etc, and in a

couple of hundred words Zack managed to capture just about the entire essence of the film and its strengths/weaknesses. Bravo.

Also- some Douche is going to point out that "neither" is misspelled, so I'm going to head that off right now.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) John barleycorn must diet  
8/20/09 2:47pm

"neither " is mispelt... Oh shit, I've been headed off! Damn you, John Barleycorn!

[Reply](#)

- [Ruler Bulon](#) Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 9:40pm

Genesis allowed is not! Is planet forbidden!

Aw. I was kinda hoping we'd end with Final Frontier and Undiscovered Country, the latter being my favorite Trek movie and former being hilarious. Next year, then!

[Reply](#)

- [a Nick](#) Ruler Bulon  
8/22/09 4:37am

I've always enjoyed that alien fellow's yoda-esque syntax. I bet he's fun at parties.

[Reply](#)

- [Come On In Here](#) Zack Handlen  
8/21/09 3:10pm

The Prisoner

Where would one find this "Prisoner" I keep looking for it online but can never find it.

I've been told it happens on the "Lost" island before it became the island from "Lost"

[Reply](#)

- [Come On In Here](#) Come On In Here  
8/21/09 3:11pm

I'm an idiot. That answer is given to me above. Good day. Be seeing you.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#) Zack Handlen  
8/23/09 4:11pm

wonderful news

i know some people were commenting on this earlier but i just wanted to express how seriously thrilled i am that AVClub will be reviewing The Prisoner and that zach will be doing the writing; without getting too dick-sucky about it, handlen is pretty much my favorite reviewer on the staff and his byline is generally enough to get me to read an article, no matter what the subject matter is.

i am kinda curious about this and will probably ask it again once the actual series reviews begin but... i've always wondered how many people got introduced to The Prisoner cold, without some prior knowledge of it? because, in my case, it was the Dean Motter comic in the late 1980s that was really my intro to the story - i have vague memories of my mom watching a bunch of people marching around a chessboard on PBS when i was a kid but i'd be lying if i said i'd been watching the series when i was six years old or something - sitting in front of moving pictures isn't really the same as understanding what you're watching.

[Reply](#)

- [The Immortal Goon](#) Zack Handlen  
8/21/09 1:41pm

Historic

One of the best things about the movie series was the reaction they had to the past. Kirk's inability to understand money always takes me back to trips abroad where I don't know simple things; McCoy's horror at the ignorance of science makes one remember that even the worst widespread theories of the past were once valid; and one of the best lines used is Krik excusing Spock for having done "LDS during the Free Speech Movement." The use of the term "Free Speech Movement" sounds exactly like something written in a broad survey of Earth history more than an actual term anybody would actually use. It's too big, and too unspecific for general use.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 2:03pm

Insurance Salesmen Need Love Too!

"It's like watching an insurance salesman flirt with a potential client before closing the deal. "  
Brilliant! I laughed out loud!

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Zack Handlen  
8/20/09 10:32pm

"Is it time for a colorful metaphor?"  
"with lots of confusion over slang and cultural mores"

Zack, did you mean "colorful metaphors"?

[Reply](#)

- [Ambrose Chapel](#)Zack Handlen  
12/02/09 10:11am

Reviews Redux?

Are the season 3 reviews starting up again soon?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Spock's Brain"/"The Enterprise Incident"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published December 4, 2009

[Comments \(133\)](#)



It used to be tough to be a geek. Oh, don't get me wrong, it still basically is—both in the biting-heads-off-chickens sense and the social outcast with a tendency to obsess over intellectual (aka, "non-sexy") pursuits sense. But these days, whether or not it'll get you laid, geek culture holds sway. The biggest movie blockbusters are genre films based on toy properties from the '80's, books dedicated to giving lonely readers a world where they are valued for their dreariness, and, of course, re-imaginings of science fiction franchises at least a decade away from relevancy. This wasn't always the case. Once, geeks had to work to defend what they loved. Case in point: when fans learned that NBC planned to cancel *Star Trek* after the original series' second season, they organized a massive letter-writing campaign to convince network executives that the show was popular enough to warrant renewal. The campaign, which has become the stuff of TV legend (and is a model for any niche show in danger of getting axed), was successful, and on September 20, 1968, *Trek* entered its third season.

I can't even imagine the satisfied feeling those fans must've had, to settle in with friends and family to watch living (well, pre-recorded) proof of their commitment, passion, and enthusiasm. I'm sure even the title card had them excited. "'Spock's Brain,' huh? Neat-o! Spock is my favorite character, and he's incredibly smart, so it logically follows that I'll enjoy any episode that revolves around him and his central nervous system!" And then, the increasingly manic resistance to the truth. "Oh wow! This slow pacing really forces me to pay close attention to the storyline to keep from falling asleep! And that's a good thing, because this plot is so paper thin on the surface that it must have a deeper level that I'm missing, right?" Eventually, denial would cease, but with acceptance would come the horrified understanding that not only did you spend a good month addressing envelopes, organizing, and making sure your demands were firm but politely phrased, just to make this episode possible—you also convinced everyone you know that the show was a.) worth saving and b.) something they should watch. So now, all of them are watching it. And some of them know where you live.

I'd like to say "Spock's Brain" isn't *that* bad, but it mostly is. The only real hope after the amateur-hour cold open—disjointed, flat, with rapid cuts that don't connect together logically—is that the remaining 45 or so minutes will at least be ridiculous enough to entertain, ala "Omega Glory." But it's a mixed bag. As an episode, this is lousy, with bad,



repetitive writing and weak direction, and in terms of mockability, it's maybe a C, C+. Because while the hilariously awful moments really are as hilarious and awful as promised, there's a distressing amount of dead air between them. Not only does the script not make much sense, it's *padded*, and that makes it worse.

Once again, the *Enterprise* is moving through space, and once again, they come across a strange ship. Before they know what to make of it, a woman in a ridiculous outfit—ah, right, this is *Star Trek*, that doesn't narrow down the field. A woman dressed like an aerobics instructor/prostitute who doesn't like to change outfits between jobs beams onto the bridge. She incapacitates everyone on board with a wrist band, and then makes goo-goo eyes at the cranium of an unconscious Spock. When Kirk and the others wake up, Spock's down in Sick Bay, and as McCoy breathlessly informs the captain, "His brain is gone!"

*TOS* isn't really known for subtle acting, but the overblown style works well with the show's inherently pulpy nature. This isn't a realistic drama, and it works best whenever one's giving it a 110 percent, because it gives a heightened atmosphere to the cheap sets and chintzy effects. If William Shatner et al is taking everything so! Damn! Seriously! then who are we to disagree? Still, it's a surprisingly delicate balance, and when the show overplays its hand, it doesn't screw around. Shatner is just a few degrees more ridiculous than usual, but DeForest Kelley is out of his mind. I'd like to think that the actors realized how terrible the dialog was and just decided to have a good time with it, because honestly, watching Kirk and McCoy grimace, cavort, and snarl their way through their scenes is entertaining, if not exactly good for the "reality" of the episode.

But then, it's not like that reality was in very good shape to start with. Kirk decides they have to get Spock's brain back (duh), and that Spock will have to accompany them on the search. Which doesn't make a whole lot of sense, because what else would he do? It's not like they can drop him off on Vulcan and get a new thinking cabbage installed. "Brain" is full of weird conversational fragments that dangle on the air and never really add up. There's a lengthy argument about where the ship that took the brain might've escaped to, which seems clever at first, but is soon revealed to be just another way to kill some screen time, since the conclusion Kirk comes to is the most obvious one. Then there's the scene when Chekov and a couple of red-shirts heat up a rock to keep themselves warm while waiting for Kirk and the others to return. Yes, it's clever use of the phasers (albeit one which we've already seen in season one), but since none of those characters are ever relevant to the plot again, why would we care? And why the hell not beam down some winter clothes, if they're going to stand watch?

The biggest time drain is the remote control rig McCoy works up to move Spock's brainless body around. It's a terrific gag (probably not intended as such) the first time we see it, but it wears thin, especially since the episode repeatedly forces us to wait with the rest of the cast while Frankenimoy slowly walks into place. As if that wasn't tedious enough, director Marc Daniels (who also helmed "Assignment: Earth," among many others) keeps cutting to Spock's expressionless, empty face during the episode's climax, despite the fact that, since the character doesn't actually have a cerebral cortex, he's incapable of responding in any way to what's happening.

Then there's the Morg and the Eymorg, the race of men and women who kidnapped Spock's brain in order to run their computers and keep them from having to think for themselves. The women, aka the Eymorg, actually did the kidnapping; they appear to be the ruling class, but have no true will or intelligence of their own, just the knowledge of their elders which is passed down to them through a plastic helmet that looks like the kind of thing a Cenobite would use for a really intense perm. What we have here is another in a long line of stupid people who used to be smart, but got stupid because their ancestors screwed up, and thank god Jim Kirk is here to fix things for them. In practical terms, this just means even more circling, monotonous dialog. The ladies repeat each line a good half a dozen times before moving on to the next. It's like a reading of sorority Twitter feeds edited by Philip Glass.

"Brain" has its funny moments—RC Spock is a hoot (and man, is that remote ever *specific*), the costumes are goofy as always, and there's a lumpy b-movie charm to some of the padding. And really, the basic idea is so hilariously misguided that it can't help but inadvertently generate at least some entertainment value. The climax, with McCoy trying to finally get Spock's noggin' fixed, is silly, especially the shots of McCoy looking increasingly distressed. It's not often you can watch someone assist at their own brain surgery, either. But as the start to the hard-earned third (and final) season of the show, this is not a very good sign at all.

Thankfully, "The Enterprise Incident," the second episode of S3, is more solid. It's got a sharp story, an excellent mid-point twist, relatively restrained performances, and, maybe most importantly of all, a brain-restored Spock at his absolute stone cold smoothness. It's not perfect, as the third act takes some short-cuts that weaken the suspense, but unlike the premiere, it's thoroughly *defensible*. Viewing this as a basic median of quality for the series, you could easily argue that *Trek* deserved a second shot.

Kirk's in a mood. It's so bad that the opening narration, traditionally the Captain's Log, is delivered by McCoy instead, explaining his concerns about James T.'s worsening mental health. Those fears are quickly confirmed, as Kirk is irritable, frustrated, and prone to snap at crew-members simply doing their jobs. Then he goes all mental and orders Sulu to plot a course straight into the Neutral Zone. Yeah, *that* Neutral Zone. Despite all protests, the course is set, and within moments of crossing into Romulan territory, the Enterprise is surrounded by three warships. (These warships aren't the same design as the one we saw in "Balance of Terror." According to "Enterprise," Romulans are now using Klingon ship models.) The Romulans demand that the *Enterprise* immediately surrender—or be destroyed.

I watched these episodes on CBS.com, and the "Enterprise" summary said, essentially, "Kirk pretends to be a Romulan in order to steal a new cloaking device." While basically true, this summary does a great disservice to anyone (like, ah, me) who hasn't watched the episode before, because this plot isn't completely revealed till at halfway in. Up until that reveal, the audience knows about as much as McCoy does. Kirk is crazy, the Neutral Zone breach is inexplicable, and when Spock betrays Kirk to the Romulan Commander (a woman. A really, really lonely woman), it looks like he's turning traitor and giving up his closest friend to the enemy. Now, given the trajectory of both characters so far, it's easy enough to realize that something about what we're seeing isn't right. But what makes "Enterprise" so cool, and what makes that summary such an unnecessarily revealing spoiler, is that it plays everything with a straight face for a very long time. There's a rising tension between the reveal we know has to be coming, and our suspicions that maybe, this once, we're wrong; maybe Spock is a bastard, maybe Kirk is having a breakdown. As suspicions go, those are in the "the friendly guy on the second floor keeps saying hello because he's eye-measuring me for his skin suit" range, but there's no hard evidence they're wrong until Kirk wakes up in sick bay and gives away the game.

"Enterprise"'s other strongest element is Spock's seduction of the Romulan Commander. Actually, it's more like *she* seduces *him*, but since it's in his best interests to keep her attention, he has to play things more consciously than she does. Their exchanges skirt melodrama—oh hell, they have a panting hemline that would get them kicked out of a strip club (jokes that almost make sense! You missed me, didn't you?), so your enjoyment of their scenes together depends on your appreciation of Nimoy's performance, and your patience with florid infatuation. As a long-time committed fan of both those things, I dug it, although even I was squirming at the end when Spock reveals his feelings for the Commander were genuine. Kirk generally has the seduce-and-destroy detail, so it's great to see Spock get his own chance, but having him fall for the Commander's over-the-top throbbing is a cliché. Maybe the better way to interpret their final exchange is that Spock respects an opponent, and wants to reduce her humiliation and embarrassment at falling for him.

As for why this episode is good-not-great, the frantic rush to steal the cloaking device, install it on the *Enterprise*, rescue Spock, and escape from the Romulans, doesn't make a whole lot of sense. For one thing, this is an incredibly desperate plan by the Federation—assuming that Kirk could get onto a Romulan ship and get the device back, what's the guarantee that alien technology will work on a Federation starship? And even if it did, what are the odds of them being able to do all this before getting their asses handed to them by some very unhappy aliens? That Kirk's disguise manages to convince the crew long enough is a stretch (obviously we don't know how big the crews are, but since two distinct Romulans were sent as hostages to the *Enterprise*, should we assume that McCoy surgical disguise was intended to make Kirk look like one of them?), but the basic reason the Romulan Commander and her team don't just attack the *Enterprise* as soon as Kirk escapes with the device—at which point destroying the Federation ship should've been the only priority—is that, for some reason, she has to be present while Spock delivers his twenty minutes worth of final words. Why, though? There's no need to immediately execute Spock, and even if there was, couldn't she attack the *Enterprise* and record Spock's speech at the same time?

This may sound like nitpicking, but in order for a climax like this to work, we have to believe that Kirk, Spock, and the

rest saved the day without any narrative cheats. The momentum and goodwill built up in the first half of the episode is enough to keep a weak ending like this from being completely lousy, but the cheats *are* there, and they're hard to ignore. There's also some hand-held camera work that doesn't do the sets any favors; much as I appreciate the immediacy that hand-held can provide, here it just looks like we're cutting to someone's on-set home movies. Season three started out under the gun, barely eked into existence by fan desperation, and suffered from a truncated budget (which was never huge even at the best of times). In order to compensate, we need the strong scripts that the previous two seasons had shown the series' writers capable of. We're off to a rocky start, but hope is not yet lost. The following exchange proves it:

Commander: Why would you do this to me? Who are you that you could do this?

Spock: First officer of the *Enterprise*.

Hell. Yes. (If that doesn't play, trust me, it's significantly more fist-pumping in action.)

#### Grades:

(I'm at a loss with the new system. Should I average these out? Use the highest grade? Just leave it blank?)

**"Spock's Brain": D**

**"The Enterprise Incident": B+**

#### Stray Observations:

- If you want to see a prime example of Shatning in action, check out Kirk's writhing when the Eymorg hit him with the pain belt.
- Speaking of, the Morg that Kirk interrogates says the Eymorg give "pain and delight." I'm a little disappointed we don't get to see Kirk, Scotty, and McCoy shuddering with—actually, no, come to think of it I'm not disappointed at all.
- "From the very first, I appreciated your ability." I *think* Kirk is being a sleaze here, but it's hard to tell.
- "A child could do it!"
- Another great Commander/Spock exchange: "Subterfuge is unworthy of a Vulcan." "You are being clever, Captain. That is unworthy of a Romulan."
- Next week, it's "The Paradise Syndrome" and "And The Children Shall Lead."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (133)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 11:52am

Nerdage Alert

It's set up that the Klingons and the Romulans have a treaty that allows them to share technology. Thus, the ship change.

To be really nerdy — that's why the Klingon D7 Battlecruiser instead of the Romulan Bird of Prey. In the new effects version, there's a Bird of Prey mixed in with the other ships.

To get godawfully nerdy, the Romulan versions of the D7 were the shit to play as in the old Star Fleet Battles game.

I will now go kill myself.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:11pm

The confusion only deepens when the Klingons start referring to some of their ships as Birds of Prey, beginning in Star Trek III. This is because in an early draft, the renegade Christopher Lloyd was supposed to have stolen a Romulan ship rather than simply be captaining a Klingon vessel.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:13pm

Then that treaty becomes really handy in explaining away a bunch of crap through fanon.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:16pm

Nah, don't kill yourself. I will add that in the new effects they add a more Romulan painting scheme to the D7's- a raptor on the bottom, sort of like with their Bird of Prey.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:17pm

And as I'm sure everyone reading this knows, the real reason why the Romulans were using Klingon ships is that someone in the prop department lost the Romulan ship model.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:27pm

Seriously, does anyone have a nerdy anticdote about why they used the Klingon stock footage rather than the Romulan stock footage?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)blasmo

12/04/09 12:48pm

I thought adding the old Bird of Prey to the Romulan formation in the new effects version was a nice touch.

I also played many, many hours of Star Fleet Battles back in the day. The Romulan D7 might have had some firepower, but the Federation has the best all-around ship designs. I'd take a Fed CA against any other cruiser in the game.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo

12/04/09 2:55pm

The Fed CA was the basis of all other ships in the SFB, pointwise. and I would take a Kzin and whip you so fast you would travel back in time and meet Gary 7.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)blasmo

12/04/09 2:58pm

Ah, SFB, those were the days. My favorites were the Klingon D7C and D5A, and the Federation CLC.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 3:03pm

My Tholian DN would snap you back to the Sargasso Octant, once I took the 13 turns to turn the damned thing around.

Oh, man...my life...so wasted...

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 3:17pm

The Tholian DN that was really just three PCs stuck together, or the real DN that showed up when that Tholian fleet showed up from their old home galaxy?

In all the time I played, no one ever used any Kzinti ships. I thought they were pretty crap, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 3:35pm

Really? Storms of drones howling out of scatter-packed shuttles? Plus the CA had 4 or 5 drone racks? Plus 4 Disrupters? Sir I would challenge you to a duel if I still had any of my SFB material.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 3:49pm

Ha! You'd probably win. We were no great strategists. A typical scenario was two fleets smashing into each other while the Romulan player lurked around cloaked. After the initial carnage, the Romulans would decloak and pick off the wounded fleets.

Still ... four photon torpedo launchers and (if I remember correctly) six Phaser-Is in the forward FA? That's some punch right there.

I still have all my SFB stuff at home in a drawer.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 4:01pm

Sadly in my group I was the worst player. Everyone else was either Gencon tournament Level or a Judge.

And the Fed CA turned like a cow, big forward punch, very difficult to get a victim in your sights.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 4:13pm

Probably why they added those sweet 360 phasers on the CC.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo  
12/04/09 4:17pm

For sweet phasers check out the Fed DDL (?) The Fleet Destroyer with phaser Gs on both sides. Wow I have a great memory for useless trivia.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)blasmo

12/04/09 4:21pm

I used to love the "one-off" ships they came up with. Like, you think it's just a regular Fed DD ... but we replaced the photons with plasma-Gs!

I also liked gatling phasers.

Maybe I should see if anybody around here wants to play sometime?

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo

12/04/09 6:15pm

I would just like to point out that this is the greatest conversation ever.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo

12/04/09 6:19pm

And that I was part of a group that used the Federation and Empire game to wage huge campaigns of destruction with SFB. We had individual names for all the ships and everything.

Greatest.

Ever.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo

12/04/09 7:32pm

For destruction you want to use the Andro Mauler

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)blasmo

12/04/09 9:43pm

All you would need to play by e-mail or live online is to get a computer wiz to whip up a gamebox of the counters for Cyberboard (you e-mail the updated map back and forth) or create a VASSAL model for it (play either by e-mail or live online - you can use Skype too).

You still need your own rules and charts, but a bunch of folks who are smarter than me have created these for dozens of old hex-and-counter games.

<http://cyberboard.brainiac....>

<http://www.vassalengine.org...>

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)blasmo

12/06/09 10:16am

Dang - nerds. ;)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

12/04/09 12:18pm

Great to Have This Back

I was wondering when we'd have our Friday Star Trek reviews back, and I'm glad they are here. Zack, do you have any plans to tackle TNG afterwards, or finish reviewing the Original Series movies?

I also think it's interesting that even after the series was cancelled the fans were able to rally again and have the space shuttle's name changed from Constitution to Enterprise via a letter-writing campaign.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 3:31pm

So the number of people necessary to make a broadcast TV show successful is much greater than the number of people necessary to pressure politicians to do something symbolic. Interesting.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 4:46pm

Also known as the 1/2 Hour News Hour Corollary.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 4:58pm

i second the idea of doing TNG after this, although it would obviously take longer. Tasha Yar really is overdue for a critical analysis, don't you think?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 5:13pm

Tasha Yar never really did too much, which is why she left the show. It wasn't until Yesterday's Enterprise that she became something more (especially with Sela coming around).

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 5:21pm

is there any fan fiction of that time she made a man out of Data? god i hope there is.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 5:48pm

That sounds like a challenge to me.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 5:50pm

I remember reading in one of those unauthorized Trek books (so take this with a grain of salt) that Tasha Yar was going to become the first official LGBT character in the Star Trek canon.

If that's true, I'm glad they killed her. Not because I have a problem with gay people; because Star Trek is at its best when it tackles social issues, but also at its worst when it tackles social issues heavy-handedly. I can see any Yar-as-24th-Century-lesbian episodes being extremely hammy.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 5:53pm

No, that was gonna be Geordi, but they canned it because a) Roddenberry apparently believed there would be no gay folk in the future and b) having him be black, blind, AND gay seemed to be piling on in 1987.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Right Wingnut  
12/04/09 8:15pm

Everyone knows the Tribbles were gay, and unwed mothers.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut  
12/05/09 1:01am

I've said it before, and I'll said it again, I'm all for some TNG reviews. maybe not the whole series as there are some definite clunkers out there, but some of the good episodes would truly be worthwhile. and also some more of the movies too, while I'm making random demands upon Handlen's workload.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut  
12/05/09 11:14am

re: Bad Horse-

"having him be black, blind, AND gay seemed to be piling on in 1987"

Pretty sure black, blind and gay is still piling it on.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Right Wingnut  
12/05/09 12:06pm

1) uosdwiS r jewoH may be my new favorite AV Club poster. He spelled Homer J Simpson upside-down, and he knows his Trek AND his Beatles.

2) Related to "Enterprise Incident": one of the best parts of Trekkies (and there were no bad parts, so this really is saying something) is where Richard Kronfeld, the guy with the Captain Pike, chair shows off his "cloaking device" and asserts that he can modify it for use on a Federation ship.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Right Wingnut  
12/05/09 12:06pm

Comma in the wrong place. That's sposta say ' Captain Pike chair, '

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Right Wingnut  
12/05/09 3:16pm

You won't be okay  
Coz your black, blind and gay  
But I've no one to play with... today.  
—Cousin Keevan the Vorta

(As for me, I'm just one out of three.)

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Right Wingnut  
12/13/09 12:00pm

Sorry I'm so late to respond... I somehow overlooked this. Shatner's Alter Ego, this is the one time I'm actually glad to have made a punctuation mistake!

SHATNER ROCKS!



[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:03pm

Hooray for Trek!

Glad to see these are back.

Personally, I enjoy Spock's Brain way more than its reputation would suggest I should. Rumor has it that it was written as a parody of what NBC wanted for the final season and the new producer missed the joke entirely. There are some lines in there that give it straight away - "I'm sure science can provide an answer to this problem," right before Kirk punches a guard out. Great fun.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 12:15pm

Also glad to see Star Trek back. It was always a fun treat on Fridays.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 12:18pm

Yes, I missed these while they were gone. Not that The Prisoner isn't a worthy project, but how will I know what to think about these episodes if Mr. Handlen doesn't break it down for me?

Speaking of not thinking for oneself: I'm about to take a couple of very long train trips, and I need some cheap paperbacks for the ride. Which of the Star Trek novels are worth reading?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 12:29pm

My favorite (and I've read a whole lot of that crap) was Federation. If you don't mind the lighter side, I thought Yesterday's Son and Return to Yesterday weren't too bad either.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 12:38pm

Look for anything written by John Vornholt. He was a favorite of mine during my Jr. High Star Trek years, and I recall the writing in those books being significantly better than the rest of those books.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 12:42pm

Federation was good. I recall the Peter David ones weren't bad in general.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Bad Horse  
12/04/09 1:04pm

I have to chime in and say that I'm glad these are back. I enjoyed the Prisoner ones as well. Those write-ups were invaluable when browsing the classic Prisoner series AMC put On Demand. However, you seem to have an incredible knack for Trek. This particular one is solid proof that you can spin the most notoriously awful Trek episode into something intriguing.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Bad Horse

12/04/09 1:28pm

Thanks for the advice, folks - I'm off to the soulless printed-matter retail center of your choice!

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Bad Horse

12/04/09 2:09pm

I agree with the Peter David books as being good Trek books. Some favorite TOS specific Trek books - The Vulcan Academy Murders; My Enemy, My Ally; Ishmael; Strangers From the Sky; Spock's World (the first Trek book I ever owned, and still a favorite); The Lost Years set; The Pandora Principle (probably my absolute favorite); Sarek.

Just personal favorites. They tend to have a Vulcan/Romulan tinge, since something about those particular species fascinated me, but The Lost Years set is pretty good and involves stories with all the main characters.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Bad Horse

12/04/09 2:24pm

I'm loving the Mirror Universe novels they are putting out, and there are two other books called Infinity's Prism (I think) which deal with Star Trek stories in different universes (so for example one where Spock died as a child and an Andorian is Kirk's second-in-command, so you see how the end of Star Trek II plays out, as well as III, IV, and VI).

The Destiny trilogy they just did was pretty good, although the trio of books leading up to it are a disaster. The books afterward have been pretty good.

I'm a fan of the recent Enterprise novels, as well. The Good that Men Do, Kobayashi Maru, and The Romulan War book 1 are decent Star Trek novels.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse

12/06/09 1:05pm

The only one I've ever read is 'Vulcan's Glory' given and dedicated to me, by the author, none other than Ms. D.C. Fontana her own self!

Respect!

(and I truly did quite enjoy it!)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Bad Horse

12/07/09 7:15am

First Frontier is excellent as well.

And yes I am again late to the party but thrilled the Trek write-ups are back. Hurrah@that!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse

12/07/09 9:43am

That's the one with the Guardian of Forever and fuckin' raptors with phasers, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Bad Horse

12/09/09 11:14am

The Vonda N. McIntyre Trek books are all great. Haven't read most of the non-Vonda library, but I have read some of the prose-ports (a better term than 'novelizations' since these didn't usually constitute entire novels) of TOS and TAS episodes. Good overall, but nothing like McIntyre's work.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Bad Horse  
1/02/10 1:26am

The best of them all is The Final Reflection by John M Ford, 1984.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Jimmy James](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 11:43am

Lust for Latinum

Never got around to seeing Spock's Brain, but its reputation precedes it. I think the same brain-control remote made a return in Deep Space Nine when Quark had to convince an alien played by Iggy Pop that a hostage Quark had hadn't been accidentally killed. Lots of walking-into-walls comedy ensued.

[Reply](#)

- [Bill Walton](#)Jimmy James  
12/04/09 11:51am

What a handsome man Leonard Nimoy is. It blows the mind when people with such breathtaking features don't rely on these god given looks but truly accomplish something be it in the arena of politics like Princess Dianna, sports with great examples being Otis Nixon and Sam Cassell and with the flawless Mr. Nimoy representing the arts.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Jimmy James  
12/04/09 12:08pm

I love that callback to this episode, Jimmy. Also, Iggy Pop walking into walls in a Vorta costume gets a chuckle out of me.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Jimmy James  
12/04/09 12:26pm

I didn't know we were talking about this today, so I haven't been able to review the episode, but didn't Spock's remote control only have, like, two buttons? It reminds me of those old RC cars that went forward, and then when you pushed the button, would do a left turn in reverse. That was it. Forward or reverse left.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Jimmy James  
12/04/09 12:34pm

The Agony Booth noticed also, John.

<http://www.agonybooth.com/r...>

'Kirk then presses the "walk forward" button, followed by the "turn 15 degrees to your right as you walk" button so that Spock wheel-of-fortunes right after Kara.

Kirk then hits the "grab her arm tightly and do not let go" button, followed by the "grab her other arm and do not let go" button. Then Kirk presses the "while still holding her arm tightly, extend your index finger slightly to the left and then press down" button to make Spock press the red button.'

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#) Jimmy James  
12/04/09 12:36pm

What made the DS9 episode better TV was that the walking into walls part of it only occupied a few minutes of the episode, though.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) Jimmy James  
12/04/09 3:47pm

Re "The Agony Booth":

It is notable that their logo for the "The Worst of Trek" uses the same screen capture as above, i.e.: Spock's Brain is the worst of all possible Treks.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#) Jimmy James  
12/04/09 5:06pm

Iggy Pop wasn't the Vorta who died and walked into walls...he was there to pick up the Vorta (Keevan) who died and was walking into walls.

It would have been nice if they had used the same remote...but alas, I think Nog was just using his tricorder to control Keevan.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#) Jimmy James  
12/04/09 5:12pm

Ah yeah, forgot about that. Still, Iggy Pop made a pretty darned good Vorta. He was no Weyoun though.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#) Jimmy James  
12/04/09 5:40pm

Weyoun was the shit. I was a die-hard TNG fan, and I passively watched DS9 because of my deep love of all things Trek, but when they introduced Weyoun, the show immediately went on my "stop everything and make time to watch this show" list. I loved every episode that centered around him.

"Treachery, Faith and the Great River" is such damn good television.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Jimmy James  
12/05/09 4:56am

Jeffrey Combs is great as the Andorian on Enterprise as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#) Jimmy James  
12/05/09 12:32pm

His Shran is one of the few truly good things to come out of that show.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#) Jimmy James  
12/06/09 10:16am

Jeffery Combs' Shran AND the giant sexy female Andorian, too. In fact, I was more than pleased that the Andorians, in general, got a great big level-up.

Anything in canon to indicate how they came to such sad circumstances by Kirk's time, and vanished completely by Picard's?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:24pm

"It used to be tough to be a geek."

I can't imagine what geekery was like in the pre internet/ DVD/VCR days. I mean you had comics, magazines, and your close circle of friends. There were only 3 or 4 tv stations and you couldn't tape or record anything. If you wanted to see a movie you either had to see it in the theater or hope for it to be on tv. Maybe if you lived near a city, you could go to a convention, but that was really it.

It is actually one of the things I really enjoy about Freaks and Geeks - you basically had to find a group of friends with the same interests and plan outings, whether its to see Airplane! for the 5th time, to get mom to give you a ride to the Star Wars convention, or join the AV Club.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/04/09 1:26pm

Listen, man, at least in the 80's there were conventions to which your mom could drive you. Being a geek in the twelfth century must have been a BITCH.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/04/09 1:48pm

Dude! All you had to do back then was join a monastery to gain exclusive access the sweet stuff the Greeks and Romans cooked up. But then the Neo-Classacists got a hold of it and everyone sold out and some English punk went and made comedies and tragedies mainstream and it just wasn't the same, man.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/04/09 2:10pm

Hey, try imagining being a girl geek in the pre-internet days. At least some of you had other dweeb boys to hang out with.

\*sniffles in the corner\*

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/04/09 2:20pm

Yeah, but wouldn't you be like, the dork queen, and you'd have tons of dudes having mad fantasies about you just because you can quote X-Files?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/04/09 2:58pm

The monastery sounds like the perfect place for medieval geeks. You get to read all day and debate who would win in a fight - Zurriel, Prince of Thrones or Shamiel, Hand of the Lord's Wrath. Plus its not like these guys were going to hit it off with the ladies anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

12/04/09 3:33pm

X-files is post-internet, El Santo.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

12/04/09 3:44pm

Being the queen dork is difficult when geek boys often think girls are icky until an inappropriately old age, and then haven't developed the necessary social skills to attract/approach geek girls.

I didn't really finally meet cool geek guys until college, which was also when the internet was really starting up. Good times.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian

12/04/09 3:53pm

@alurin: see, I thought about that, but I noticed DCRJ's avatar and I wanted to score some dork points. Besides, the World Wide Web was just starting up at around Season 2 or so. I remember having to follow stuff on newsgroups those days. Fun times!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

12/04/09 12:07pm

We Saved Star Trek For This?

Can you imagine what would have happened were there a blogosphere that was all happy with the saving of Star Trek in 1968 only to be rewarded with "Spocks Brain?" IO9 would have simply melted away.

Also, I believe that the real reason that the Romulans were using Klingon ships was budgetary: they still had Klingon models around, but not Romulan, so they then retconned a treaty to explain it away.

As you might remember, that Klingon-Romulan treaty was HUGE plot point throughout S3. Oh wait, no it wasn't.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)barefoot jim

12/04/09 2:05pm

With respect to the idea that the "Spock's Brain" script - by Gene Coon as "Lee Cronin" - was a parody, I can't see it that way, perhaps because it was the FIRST episode I ever saw: the third-season premiere, which was right around my 12th birthday. And until weekday reruns began, third-season episodes were all I knew - good effects and excellent music, but often lousy scripts with too much dependence on Kirk's (or Spock's, Scotty's, McCoy's, Chekov's) romances (not to mention the Kirk-Uhura forced kiss). In other words, I accepted the series for what it was, which was certainly more interesting, despite these flaws, than Lost in Space (1965-68) had been.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)barefoot jim

12/04/09 3:29pm

Yeah, I know - I saw the series premiere, which began documentary-style and seemed quite realistic (well, I had just turned 9). I was referring to the series once its tone became firmly established, during which a walking, talking carrot (played by Stanley Adams, who played Cyrano Jones in Star Trek the same year) seemed not at all out of place.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)barefoot jim

12/04/09 3:31pm

That's true, Old Man. They used to rerun Lost In Space on Channel 32 out of Chicago back in the '70s. Some of the earlier episodes were pretty good. Later it got campy and bad.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)barefoot jim

12/04/09 3:35pm

I hope I am not accidentally posting this twice, but the early b/w episodes were not bad. It was only later that the show became campy and awful.

Didn't Dr. Smith turn into a giant asparagus or celery stalk or something?

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)barefoot jim

12/09/09 11:10am

The first Star Trek episode I ever saw was "Obsession." Appropriate title, that. Toward the beginning of the episode there's a crane shot of some dead redshirts who have just been exsanguinated (or whatever the word is) by the vampire cloud. That's the first moment of Trek I ever saw. I was four years old, possibly five. And, since this is The Onion AV Club, I might as well say that when I'm about to die, I'm almost certain that the life of James T. Kirk will flash before my eyes. Hopefully it'll be Shatner's original James T. rather than the updated "Dawson's Kirk" or "Dawson's Trek" or whatever the most recent derisive nickname for the other guy is.

I'm sure Chris Pine is a very nice person. :-)

—Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JammerJim](#)Zack Handlen

12/04/09 12:03pm

The seams do show after all these years

Enterprise Incident was always one of my favorite eps, but re-watching it a couple of months ago revealed all the unfortunate seams and stitching that Zack talks about here.

Still, the first 2/3 - 3/4 is really good stuff, and parts of the last act also work well: Scotty's fear the device will blow the ship up, Kirk's sudden course change to get away, Spock and the commander in the turbo lift. Heck, even the normally unfunny ending joke works this time.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)JammerJim

12/04/09 12:16pm

I agree - this episode is best the first time you see it. Especially if you haven't been ruined by the rotten spoiler ZH describes above. The iTunes description of this episode is pretty similar and similarly infuriating.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)JammerJim

12/04/09 12:22pm

Regardless, it's still the best episode of the Third Season, and one of my favorites.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)JammerJim

12/04/09 2:02pm

Agreed, this has always been a favorite episode of mine ("The Enterprise Incident", not "Spock's Brain"), although it should be noted that I had a massive crush on Spock, which also explains why I did not date until my late teens. In any event, when I see this episode now, I still view it largely through nostalgic eyes, although the ending was never as good as the beginning/middle scenes. Certainly one of the strongest of Season 3, and one of my favorite TOS episodes, period.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)JammerJim  
12/04/09 3:23pm

Raktajino stains?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JammerJim  
12/05/09 5:02am

Tranya stains are a by-product of not dating until your late teens.  
(they come out in the wash)

[Reply](#)

- [Ruddy Ruddy](#)JammerJim  
12/07/09 12:05am

The best part about the Enterprise Incident is that after Kirk steals the cloaking device, the Romulans rush into the cloaking device room — which contains only the cloaking device — and a full beat passes before someone realizes that the only thing normally contained in the room is gone.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 2:01pm

The return of AV Club Trek Fridays AND happy hour starting soon?

Thank you, thank you so very much. Awesome line btw Zack: seduce-and-destroy. Tshirt worthy, I would even buy it in the Onion store.

Great to see this back.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/04/09 3:41pm

and also, PIZZA DAY!

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/04/09 3:56pm

yes Lil' Guppy, pizza day too.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/04/09 5:26pm

I'm partial to the "woman dressed like an aerobics instructor/prostitute who doesn't like to change outfits between jobs" line myself. It's hard to get such a potentially clunky line to come out just right. Great writeup all in all.



[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/05/09 5:15am

"seduce and destroy" comes from Magnolia, but it's well-used ehre. I too am thrilled to see Zach's back and I laughed out loud several times reading this. 'Jokes that almost make sense' indeed!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/05/09 3:38pm

I was charmed by the "jokes that almost make sense" line myself.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/06/09 1:15pm

And the almost-joke that preceded it...

(and I quite like your name, Mr Clam.. I miss Phil Dick)

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/06/09 2:30pm

All I need is a toilet stall with a glory hole.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Derek Martz](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:16pm

The Grading.

I think it's only fair that there is a separate grade-box-thing for each episode. Can that be done?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Derek Martz  
12/04/09 12:30pm

Screw it- leave it blank and we'll read it at the bottom.

Also, Wolverine got a D. Spock's Brain got a D. Wolverine was at least two letter grades better than Spock's Brain. I demand restitution.

[Reply](#)

- [Optramark](#)Derek Martz  
12/04/09 12:36pm

I think separation would be best, but absent that, it seems like this system is the way to go, with no aggregate score (cause how much more arbitrary is that?), and individual episodes scored in the review. Also, like the rest of the huddled masses, I'm so happy these reviews are back.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Derek Martz  
12/06/09 10:06am

I gave it A+ entirely on the strength of Enterprise Incident. It has surly Kirk & pimpin' Spock, plus it has the kind of plot this series needed a lot more of. Fuck everything, let's go steal a coaking device and never mention it again. Love those musical stings when you see the Enterprise surrounded by Romulans. They show up again randomly in All Our Yesterdays.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Derek Martz  
1/02/10 1:28am

Musical stings by Alexander Courage, his first work for the series since season 1. During season 2 he was off working on Dr Doolittle.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Derek Martz  
1/02/10 2:17am

Spock's Brain score by Fred Steiner. Jeff Bond points out "an almost classically-styled fugal piece of fight music (Caveman Run)" that returned in later episodes including "For the Worlds I Hollow" and "Day of the Dove".

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 3:08pm

Winter Relief

"And why the hell not beam down some winter clothes, if they're going to stand watch?"

The troops of Trek are always as well prepared for bad weather as the Germans on the eastern front. Being in space and all, you'd think they'd have a spacesuit or two handy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)magnus  
12/04/09 3:26pm

You ever notice they never go down to a hot planet? Its always "oh, my, its too cold." Its never, "wow, Spock, I'm really hot, I'll take my shirt off."

Which is odd, because Kirk nevertheless finds himself shirtless a fair amount of the time. Hmmm.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)magnus  
12/04/09 3:29pm

And doubly odd because even on those supposedly cold planets, it was surely hotter than hell on the set.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)magnus  
12/04/09 4:20pm

Yeah, Kirk's shirt did end up ripped a good deal of the time. I loved it when Kirk did it himself during the Futurama Trek ep. That was one of the best Trek fan eps of all time.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)magnus  
12/05/09 12:14pm

I wonder if we all could agree that the Futurama Trek episode was the ultimate convergence of all things holy and geeky?

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:09pm

Brain and brain, what is brain??  
Hooray, Zach! Glad this column is back.

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Posters](#)simonillyan  
12/04/09 7:46pm

"Brain and brain" and "Headin' out to Eden . . . Yeah, brother" sum up season 3 pretty well.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clams](#)simonillyan  
12/05/09 3:13pm

But for four episodes of un-alloyed Star Trekky greatness—"The Enterprise Incident," "The Day of the Dove," "The Tholian Web" and "Spectre of the Gun"—and one incredible masterpiece of pitch dark camp—"Whom God's Destroy," essentially as close as we'll ever get to seeing Adam West's Batman visit Arkham Asylum—the third season is rightfully written off by many as the turd season.

[Reply](#)

- [Schoolhouse Reck](#)simonillyan  
12/05/09 6:43pm

Still, YAY ZACK!!! Welcome back.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clams](#)simonillyan  
12/06/09 3:58am

Indeed. I just feel bad that it has to end with so much dross.

[Reply](#)

- [TheCzarCastIchbasTurd](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 11:34am

At first blush

this subject does not seem to be one that lends itself to serious discussion. However, initial impressions are not always accurate, and topics that appear to be mundane or narrow in scope may actually be subjects, like this one, of great import and that have implications across the width and breadth of a variety of social and economic strata.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)TheCzarCastIchbasTurd  
12/04/09 12:16pm

Your discussion prowess would be better served in finding a cure for your imminent cancerAIDS.

[Reply](#)

- [Montypark](#)TheCzarCastIchbasTurd  
12/04/09 7:05pm

I was hoping really hard that he would do this earlier, especially since I watched the entire series in the space of about two months and did a write-up emphasizing the frequent threat of cancellation. But then the Prisoner thread started, which is cool, but still...

Damn you, Handlen! Why must we be doomed to be out of sync!?

[Reply](#)

- [i and 1](#)TheCzarCastIchbasTurd  
12/05/09 1:09am

CANCERAIDS... Damn it Jim, I'm a surgeon, not a doctor!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:15pm

Hazaah!

Hazaah!

Star Trek's back!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/04/09 9:29pm

I am weeing myself with joy.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/05/09 12:59am

well, I won't go so far as to admit weeing myself... but, I too thank Handlen for bringing back the Trek. The Prisoner turned out to be more than worthy of a few months's attention (how had I not seen that before?), but there's nothing quite like some Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/05/09 12:19pm

As always I remain continent and optimistic.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen  
12/05/09 8:25am

Finally! Grades I agree with with!

And yes, that exchange between Spock and the RC rocks.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Lord Running Clam  
12/05/09 3:09pm

I meant you! He was talking to you!

Oh my God. Oh my God. Thank you, Remote Control. I think I just... I think I just had a breakthrough.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Lord Running Clam  
12/06/09 1:16pm

Get a room, you two!

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Zack Handlen  
12/06/09 10:10am

Horny Romulan Blues

Just to emphasize that, along with all of the other weaknesses of their plan, Spock's "seduce-and-destroy" mission could only have worked if the Commander was INSANELY HORNY.

Which, conveniently enough, she was.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Meander  
12/06/09 1:16pm

Clearly you've never dated a Romulan.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen  
12/05/09 12:42am

It's a Spockmas miracle  
Zack! You're alive! I...

Ahem... I am pleased to see you. Pardon the outburst. Merely my logical relief that Star Trek had not lost an able recapper.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Chico McDirk  
12/05/09 12:29pm

In a pig's eye!

[Reply](#)

- [Mr Tea](#)Zack Handlen  
6/10/11 7:57am

OK, so it's Friday afternoon here in the office...

Way back in my very early teens I saw a film called Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, starring Murray Head, which my still-developing critical faculties hailed as a surrealist fantasy masterpiece. Two decades or so later I noticed it in the TV listings and told loads of people it was well worth a look. Then when I sat down to re-watch it I was horrified to find that it was actually a bit of a clunker, to put it kindly.

My first viewing of Spock's Brain probably also occurred when I was in a state of adolescent flux, because there was a time when I would have ranked it right up there with Mirror, Mirror. Many years later I was forced to revise this judgement when I bought a selection of fondly remembered episodes on VHS. Even so, I think your judgement is a little harsh. What saves it for me is the scene where McCoy starts to lose his enhanced surgical knowledge and abilities while re-installing his ship-mate's grey matter. DeForest Kelly utterly nails this, and just for a fleeting moment the episode has all the heartbreaking poignancy of 'Flowers for Algernon'.  
C-

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen  
3/06/14 7:00am

"Spock's Brain" is just beyond ridiculous. What could have been an interesting, if preposterous, idea, turns into a completely ridiculous 50 minutes of TV. Never mind the silly plot, there are so many things wrong about this episode. How did these people know about Spock and why HIS brain? Yes, he's incredibly smart, but there was nobody smarter in the entire galaxy? Then the fact that they have him mechanically walking around and the fact that they could still communicate with his brain. Then the fact that Spock is able to talk McCoy through most of the operation... and then not only was all of his hair intact after having a brain transplant (twice), but he just sits up and starts talking like nothing happened. If they had executed this in a much better way, there would have at least been some complications after the surgery. Or they would have shown him with his hair shaved... or indicated that he would have to rest for awhile. No, he just sits up and starts talking more than ever. It was just so far-fetched and amateurish.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:25pm

"check out Kirk's writhing when the Eymorg hit him with the pain belt."

Appropriately enough, I was watching the old 25th Trek Anniversary Special on the Bio Channel the other night, and they showed a clip from Wonder Years parodying the aliens in Spock's Brain, and Fred Savage did a perfect impersonation of Shat's writhing in pain. Quite amusing.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 4:06pm

Nimoy Strike?

As a child watching Spock's Brain, I assumed the actor was mad at the other actors and wouldn't talk to them, so they wrote an episode to get around this.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Zack Handlen  
12/04/09 12:23pm

Excellent

It's great to see this column again and it's great to see the Romulans again.

It's been a while for both, hasn't it?

[Reply](#)

- [Michael Knight](#)Zack Handlen  
7/08/16 11:50pm

A Hellraiser description, I think an Ian Malcolm quote, and Phillip Glass.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "The Paradise Syndrome"/"And The Children Shall Lead"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published December 11, 2009

[Comments \(79\)](#)



Indians are just so adorable, aren't they? I mean Native Americans, but that's such a cold, clinical name. "Indians" was good enough for our forefathers, and "Indians" they shall remain in our hearts. Such sweet, childish innocents! I bet the only language they speak (aside from broken English) is friendship, their only currency, hugs. We could learn a lot from them, about nature and one-ness and living in triangles. We feel terrible about the whole mass murder thing, but to compensate, we will idealize them in a fashion that in no way allows them the full culpability, intelligence, and complexity of an *actual* human being. No, you don't have to say "Thank you" in whatever juttled syllable baby gibberish you call words. We already know what you mean. And you're already welcome.

If this sounds bitter, I just watched "The Paradise Syndrome," and have been assured on multiple fronts that it works as an example of how the rest of the third season will play out. This is not happy knowledge. "Syndrome" isn't as dire as "Spock's Brain," but it is terribly silly and not very well-thought out. Apart from the occasional clunker, the first couple seasons of *Trek* are solid TV; the cultural image of the series is usually goofy aliens and Shatner chewing the same three sets over and over again, and going by seasons one and two, that image is, if not entirely unearned, more than a little exaggerated. Only four episodes into *this* season, though, and I'm realizing where the stereotype comes from. "Syndrome" features two of *Trek's* most familiar liabilities, a ridiculous plot and a ridiculous leading man. And unfortunately, it provides no substance to distract from either.

An un-named, Earth-like planet is threatened by an approaching asteroid. Before stopping the asteroid, Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam down to the planet's surface for a quick walk-around. Already this doesn't make a whole lot of sense. If the planet is in danger, if the *Enterprise* has plans to divert the threat, and if those plans require meeting the asteroid at a very specific time and position (as Spock later explains to McCoy), why visit the planet beforehand? Their records already indicate that the local population is pre-space travel, and there's no intention or need to evacuate them. The only reason to show up while the threat is active is to allow what happens next to happen: a crewmember (Kirk, natch) is left behind. (There's also the question of why the Federation is involving themselves in this sort of activity at all, as it seems perilously close to violating the Prime Directive as well as incredibly time consuming, but I'll let that pass. Because really, in an idealized sort of way, having star-ships running around protecting those who can't, apparently, protect

themselves is rather sweet.)

While wandering around the area—which, it must be said, is lovely and unusual for the series, in that it's an outdoor, forest setting that isn't faked—our heroes find an obelisk covered in unfamiliar writing. The indigenous (or seemingly indigenous) population doesn't have the technology to build such a thing, which is strange; even stranger is that when Kirk stands on the obelisk's base and calls up to the *Enterprise*, the stone under his feet slides away, dropping him into the statue's base to land on a control panel in an enclosure below. The panel zaps him, knocking him unconscious. Spock and McCoy search the area for a few hours, but are unable to find him; given that time is running out on their saving-the-world mission, they're forced to temporarily abandon the captain.

McCoy's never been the cuddliest of characters, but he spends most of "Syndrome" arguing loudly with whomever happens to be standing closest, and unsurprisingly, that "whom" is almost always Spock. Their relationship is one of the series' most compellingly rough-edged, with McCoy's knee-jerk emotionalism constantly running aground of Spock's pragmatism, but while other episodes have managed the balance between the two, here McCoy falls into a pattern of unthinking opposition. The dynamic remains effective—Spock's choices make the situation consistently worse, despite the fact that they're always the *right* choices, which puts McCoy in the weird position of being proven right despite having his reasoning be essentially flawed. But more than once, the doctor's nay-saying makes him appear unforgivably dense, like when Spock has to actually give him a careful, step-by-step demonstration of *Enterprise's* *Armageddon*-style objective.

But at least the scenes with the George and Martha the sci-fi set are buoyed by a clear objective. Kirk's sojourn with the Indians (who here are about as non-Native American as you can get without being actual from-India Indians) is a campy, inane side-trip that features Shatner at his all around most ridiculous, full of flat, ineffectual characters, with a story that's supposed to be moving but is really just pathetic. When Kirk wakes up from the mind-zapping, his memory is gone. He's soon discovered by two women from the nearby tribe of generically peaceful folks (Spock, from a distance, identifies them as a mixture of "Navajo, Mohican, and Delaware Indians"). They take him back to their home on the assumption that he's a god because, hey, white man, obelisk, you do the math. The men of the tribe, most notably Salish, the "medicine chief," are suspicious, but Kirk proves his worth when he brings a drowned boy back to life through a complex system of CPR and low-impact aerobics. The big Chief, in fact, is so convinced that he fires Salish on the spot and gives Kirk Salish's job. Oh, and Kirk can't really remember his name, and calls himself Kirok instead.

Kirok's adventures in Frontier Land follow a predictable path—he even gets married to the tribal priestess, Miramanee, thus making an enemy out of Salish for life. At the start of episode, Kirk's immediate infatuation with the landscape leads McCoy to say he's suffering from "Tahiti Syndrome," essentially so over-stressed and over-worked that he's pining for a simpler, more idyllic life. Which he then gets in the form of some Saturday morning kid show costumes and giggly girl wrestling. It would all be easier to take if it wasn't for the connection to actual Native Americans. We eventually learn that the people Kirk meets are the descendants of tribes transplanted from our own Earth by an alien race known as the "Preservers." (McCoy theorizes that this is why there are so many humanoid races spread around the universe.) So all the trite ritual, the fact that the populace hasn't evolved in any way in the hundreds of years they've been on their own, it's supposed to mean that they live in paradise, but what it really comes off as is Noble Savage style silliness. This might have been progressive when the episode first aired, but I can't help thinking the episode would've fared better if the aliens actually had been aliens. Nothing would've saved the look on Kirk's face when he thinks "I have found paradise," though.

But we still haven't explained that obelisk, have we. After the *Enterprise* fails to shift the asteroid, Spock falls to obsessing over the strange language printed on the statue's side. It's a "Vulcan hunch," and it pays off. The obelisk was left by the Preservers for the Indians to use in case of an asteroid threat. Whenever the sky darkens, the medicine chief is supposed to follow the ancient ritual and the obelisk with take care of the problem. (Apparently, this happens a lot.) Too bad Salish's father died without passing on the information. Now the assumption in the tribe is that Kirok's assumed godhood will keep them safe. When he turns out to be just as much in the dark as everybody else, the situation turns ugly, and it's only Spock and McCoy's well-timed arrival that keeps Kirk from being stoned to death. (Or is it? I couldn't tell if the "peaceful" Indians were frightened off by the men appearing out of nowhere, or if they just decided they'd thrown enough rocks.)



It's too late for Miramanee, though. Medical science can't top plot contrivance, so Mrs. Kirok dies, taking Kirk's unborn child along with her. Kirk and Spock manage to get the obelisk working properly, as the language on the statue's side is a series of notes, which, ha-ha, just happen to match up with tones Kirk makes when he says, "Kirk to Enterprise." The day is saved, Kirk gets his memory back after a quick mind-meld, and while I think we're supposed to experience some kind of grief in the final shot of Kirk comforting his dying wife, that's undercut by the wife's lack of visible injuries and decision to lie on her back with one leg slightly raised like a pin-up model. All in all, this was goofy without being anywhere close to good.

Continuing the trend established last week, the second episode of our usual two-fer, "And The Children Shall Lead," is solid. I'm even willing to upgrade that to "swell." The storyline is composed of a hodge-podge of things we've already seen, but if I may be unbelievably pretentious for a moment, I'd like to suggest that episodic television in the continuity-free age is a lot like classic blues: it's not innovation as much as what's being done with the same old routines. (This comparison has been stolen from other, more innovative writers, but if you'll permit me, I'd like to suggest that television criticism is *also* like classic blues, in that my dog is dead, and I haven't been laid in years.) Without the ability to build sweeping, multi-part stories or allowing characters to change over time, old school *Trek* hews to a few basic patterns and improvises outward. You'll get the occasional striking and original shows ("The City On The Edge Of Forever," and my personal favorite, "Amok Time"), but while those are great, real fan-dom is determined by one's appreciation for the middle of the road.

"Children" is a variant on the "god-like being" motif, this time using misguided human agency to carry out the will of an ancient monster. We've seen the *Enterprise* under alien control before, and unsurprisingly, it falls to Kirk and Spock to defeat the threat. But the joy is in the details. The monster here is played by Melvin Belli, a lawyer who I'm only familiar with because Brian Cox played him in David Fincher's *Zodiac*; Belli's real-life fame doesn't have the same cultural cache it would've had when this episode first aired, but the disconnected bombast he brings to the role works fine. The various ways the crew is held mentally captive are often clever and visually inventive. And the "human agency" that Belli uses to carry out his will is a bunch of snot-nosed kids. We've had our share of killer kids before, but these are interesting in that "Lead" actually has a point to make on how young minds can be misled through self-interest, and it leads to a sentimental-seeming conclusion that's actually deeply sad just below the surface.

After the lush forests of "Syndrome," "Lead" finds Kirk et al visiting Triacus III on orders to contact the planet's science expedition; we're back on the usual dirt 'n' boulder set here, so anyone with allergies can relax. Instead of the expected team of men and women, our heroes find corpses—the only living adult, Starnes, is terrified to see Kirk (who, apparently, knows him—does Kirk know *everyone* in Starfleet?), and dies immediately on contact. Before the landing party can assess the situation, a group of children run out, laughing and chanting, and none of them are troubled in the slightest about the death that surrounds them. (The use of "Ring Around the Rosy" is a nice touch.)

It takes a while for the truth to come out, but we'll jump ahead—Triacus used to be the home marauding race who lay waste to the nearby planets, until those planets finally teamed up and took them down. But one bandit survived, somehow, and it's either his spirit or some aspect of that long dead culture that's now controlling the kids. It's never made explicit, but the Gorgan needs followers in order to be powerful, and the kiddies were the easiest ones to manipulate. (Is Belli's character supposed to be one of the dead marauders, or is he the force that made them evil? Or is his presence the last vestiges of their combined wickedness?) He instructs the children to use the powers he's given them to take over the *Enterprise* and fly to Marcus XII, where the Gorgan will amass more followers, and spread his influence still further through the galaxy. On his own, he's just a ghost. But he's a very persuasive ghost, and the more people listen to him, the worse things get.

Actually, that may be underestimating the creature's power. The adults on Triacus were clearly under his influence—the *Enterprise* was called in because the Gorgan wanted a ship, and it's hard to tell if the mass suicide that followed was the adults realizing they'd been used, or the Gorgan wanting a clean slate. (I'd prefer the latter. The idea that a bunch of parents would orphan their children so willingly is freaky.) Once on the ship, the creature uses the kids to do his dirty work, and because they're kids, they have some fun with it. When Sulu tries to alter course away from Marcus, the view-screen fills the stars with rotating circles of knives, and when Uhura tries to contact Starfleet, the mirror on her

console shows her the reflection of an old, old woman. (So, the man is faced with potential destruction and death, while the woman is scared of aging. Sigh. And why the hell does Uhura have a mirror on her console, anyway? In case her make-up needs a touch?) Kirk is made to doubt his ability to command, while Spock is briefly incapable of following orders, but they both manage to shake off the influence. No great shock there.

Head games are always fun (if there's a therapist on the *Enterprise*, I think it's safe to assume that person is paid very, very well), and it's interesting how the children use their powers in predictably childish ways. Generally they're effective—the knives are a ridiculous concept, but with that much power, it's not hard to make them convincing—but the mistakes they make are telling, like when they mind-warp Chekov and Sulu into believing that they can still see the planet Triacus on the forward screen. This convinces both helmsmen that the ship is still orbiting the planet as ordered, and lets the kids change course, but because the kids are short-sighted (a condition typical of but not limited to the young), they don't bother to ensure everyone else on the bridge sees the same illusion. So Uhura turns around and sees Triacus is gone, and the game is nearly up, until she looks in the mirror.

This childish limitation comes into play most strongly during the episode's climax, when Kirk and Spock team up to break the Gorgan's hold. Throughout the ep, Kirk has been baffled by the kids' seeming indifference to their parents' deaths. McCoy attributes this to shock, but it's really just a sign of the alien's influence; by convincing them that their parents were boring, the Gorgan is able to keep his followers in a state of constant sugar-high mania, right up until Spock starts playing home movies on one of the screens on the bridge. The change is immediate, and the truth finally sinks in—Mom and Dad are dead, and you are in some way responsible. Sure, nobody will blame you for it (there has to be a clause for this kind of thing in the standard Federation exploration contract, right?), but that doesn't make it any easier to deal with.

If anything connects "Syndrome" with "Lead," is that both have characters trying to retreat from reality into impossible fantasy. In "Syndrome," Kirk's brief escape from his harsh, no-Indian-princess-screwing life has tragic consequences, although not for him. The ending of "Lead" is more memorable, not for the fate of the Gorgan—who suffers a typical "you don't believe in me, I'm doomed!" dissolution—but in the fact that in order to win, Kirk has to force a bunch of eight and ten year olds to face the most horrible news they'll most likely ever get in their lives. And then he has to *rub it in*. That he saves the day by doing so almost seems like a bonus.

#### **Grades:**

**"The Paradise Syndrome": C**

**"And The Children Shall Lead": B+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- This week had explanations for two different MST3K gags: "I am Kirok!" pops up in many Comedy Central episodes, and the space kids who torment Pearl Forrester use the same fist shaking gesture as the Gorgan's children.
- The Obelisk is awfully specific, isn't it? If the Indians were troubled by a plague of locusts or a mass flooding or a volcano, would it snicker?
- That UFP flag looks suspiciously like a thing somebody wants me to buy.
- Shatner was lousy in "Syndrome," but he does solid work in "Lead." There's a line he gives—"Auxiliary Control, my Vulcan friend"—that would've sounded ridiculous coming from anyone else, but he makes it work.
- Next week, it's "Is There In Truth No Beauty?" and "The Spectre Of The Gun."

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (79)
- Pending

Sort by:

## Popular

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 12:42pm

Give TOS credit.

The ep titles were badass.

Too bad DS9 came along and had better ones.

### [Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 1:01pm

Like? "We ripped this off Babylon 5" or "Look! Tribbles and CGI"?

### [Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 1:03pm

Well, they're mostly Shakespeare quotes.

Hard to do better than Shakespeare.

### [Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 1:20pm

B5 definitely wins the pretentious episode titles award. The best DS9 can do is "Wrongs Darker than Death or Night" or "Nor The Battle To The Strong", whereas B5 has some real humdingers. It's hard to top "Falling Toward Apotheosis" or "The Deconstruction of Falling Stars".

### [Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 2:52pm

My favorite B5 episode title is "Parliament of Dreams".

But TOS definitely kicked ass over all Trek series in terms of episode titles. The TNG titles were as deathly boring as the interior design of the ship. DS9 titles only got good in the last couple of seasons. Best TOS title: "For the World is Hollow and I have Touched the Sky."

BSG had a few good ones, mainly in S4. "A Disquiet Follows My Soul", "Blood on the Scales", etc.

### [1](#)

### [Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 3:35pm

DS9 had "Inter Arma Enim Silent Leges," though. Not only is it Latin, but it's not one of the one folks use all the time like "caveat emptor" or "carpe diem." But I will agree that "For the World is Hollow and I have Touched the Sky" is a badass title for a so-so episode, and point out that, in general, TNG titles were either boring or stupid.

### [Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)D.N. Nation  
12/11/09 5:08pm

Jimmy, that is the episode I thought of when I read this thread.

### [Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)D.N. Nation

12/11/09 9:59pm

"Elementary, My Dear Data"

"A Fistful of Datas"

"Picnic at Hanging Data"

"Data II: Positronic Boogaloo"

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)D.N. Nation

12/11/09 10:17pm

I heard at one point they wanted to title "Up the Long Ladder" as "Send in the Clones," but thankfully thought better of it. That's the Irish stereotypes meet the Raelians episode, in case you're using your brain to store \*useful\* information.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)D.N. Nation

12/11/09 10:23pm

"Star Trek had kind of a lingering vestige of 50's pulp science fiction attached to it. Everybody knows that 50's sci-fi had the best titles."

Star Trek wasn't just a "lingering vestige" of 50s pulp science fiction - it was the expression of OG fanboys who GREW UP on 50s pulp science fiction. Just like how modern CGI make it possible for 70s fanboys to make comic book movies NOW.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation

12/11/09 10:38pm

How about these episode titles?

The Man on the Monkey Board

How Much a Pound Is Albatross?

Blues for the Left Foot

Hell Is Empty, All the Devils Are Here

Ever Ride the Waves in Oklahoma?

Give the Old Cat a Tender Mouse

Narcissus on an Old Red Fire Engine

Build Your Houses with Their Backs to the Sea

I'm Here to Kill a King

93 Percent in Smiling

I never pass up an opportunity to trumpet the pretentious episode titles of "Route 66" and then point out how good most of them actually are.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)D.N. Nation

12/12/09 1:42pm

Are you kidding, meyer, those title's are great!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)D.N. Nation

12/12/09 8:10pm

It's true TOS titles kicked ass - they were as OTT literary as Hell, like a City College Grad showing off his Associate of Liberal Arts Degree! :D

- "Where No Man Has Gone Before"
- "The Conscience of the King"
- "Devil in the Dark"
- "Dagger of the Mind"
- "Return of the Archons"

and of course the winner and still champion, beloved by all - "For the Earth is Hollow, and I Have Touched the Sky."

What does TNG have to compete, anyway? "We'll Always Have Paris"?!?!?

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)D.N. Nation  
12/12/09 10:40pm

Lord Clam: I know they're great! Pretentious, but still great. For my money, "Route 66" is one of the best shows ever made, and Sterling Siliphant (the show-runner and main writer) always came up with interesting stuff.

For anyone who likes Trek - an episodic show without character arcs that stands as a product of its times in both good and bad ways, "Route 66" is worth a spin. The two leads admittedly aren't very good actors, but the new supporting cast each week is usually top-class. And the whole production was a traveling caravan shooting on location and they criss-crossed the country more than once over four seasons - if you just want a good look at what the U.S. looked like circa 1960, you won't have wasted your time. Half the shows center on one job site or another (fishing boat, oil rig, timber mill, aquarium, security firm, ad agency, nightclub, ranch, farm, etc.).

Plus a 1960 Corvette that's inexplicably upgraded to the newest model each season. Oh, and I should mention that every woman who shows up is psychologically damaged, completely insane, or at least in some kind of peril.

OK - that's my latest TV Club pitch for "Route 66" - any takers? Zach?

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation  
12/13/09 3:16am

Thanks for alerting us to the awesomeness of Route 66 titles. I've never watched the show, but it was interesting to learn that William Shatner and Dee Kelley starred in the show and that George Clayton Johnson had a writing credit. (This is, nominally, a Star Trek thread, after all. )

Route 66 episode titles reminded me of Outer Limits titles and also reminded me of the names of King Crimson songs. (I can't decide whether "Shall Forfeit His Dog and Ten Shillings to the King"—the name of a Route 66 segment—seems more like the title of a Genesis song than the title of a King Crimson song, but it's still prog, innit?) So, I used a text-scrambler to combine all three: 66, Outer Limits, and Crimson. This'll be broken into segments because otherwise I'll get an error saying that my message has too many line breaks.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation  
12/13/09 3:17am

A Bridge Across Walnuts and Goodbye

.

The Probe Is Albatross?

.

Incident on My Foot

.

Larks' Tongues in His Dog

.

Expanding Human Demon with a Bridge Across Walnuts and Games

.

Somehow It Crawled Out of the End of Saturday

.

21st Century Schizoid Man Who Will Cheer My Foot

.

Expanding Human Demon with a Nice Girl?

.

Larks' Tongues in Oklahoma?

.

1800 Days to the Monkey Board

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation

12/13/09 3:18am

There's a Motherless Child Effigy in Aspic

.

The Brain of Persons Close to a Trunk

.

His Right Mind Needs a Trunk

.

Silence The Brain of Time

.

The Brain of Spider County Specimen: Unknown Second Chance

.

Larks' Tongues in Search of Glass Hand

.

The Brain of Lonely Pagliaccis

.

Decay of an Enchantress

.

Suppose I Said I Am Between Hello and Tomorrow and Tomorrow Shall Forfeit His Dog and an Enchantress

.

Kiss the Cat Food

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation

12/13/09 3:19am

Expanding Human Demon with the Sounds of Mischief

.

Come Eat the Cat

.

A Theme Cat Jumped Over the White Dove With Their Backs to Ninevah

.

You Can't Pick Cotton in Aspic

.

From an Afternoon Soda Pop and Ten Drops of Poseidon

.

42nd at the Bottom of the Cat

.  
Ladies of the Devils Are Here to Kill a King In the White Line Lizard's Leg

.  
It Gets to Hurt Me More Than It Gets to the Queen of a Nice Girl?

.  
Build Your Houses With Their Backs to the Dancing Water Lizard

.  
Treadmill Cadence and the Broken Wing Across Walnuts and Owlet's Wing Across Walnuts and  
Decay of the Wedding

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation  
12/13/09 3:22am

I Said I Am Between Hello and Paper Flags

.  
There Are Poxies at the Purple Twilight

.  
The Mice Controlled Experiment

.  
Mirrors I Wouldn't Start From

.  
Layout at the Monster, Make Thunder His Tribute

.  
Expanding Human Factor Corpus Earthling Nightmare

.  
Go Read the Woodwork

.  
The Dance of Things Unknown

.  
Fun and Decay

.  
The Hundred Days to Kill a Coin Legacy

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)D.N. Nation  
12/13/09 3:24am

It Crawled Out of Tears Like a Warrior Suppose I Wouldn't Start From Here to the Closing of Spain  
Somehow

.  
Hey Moth, Come Out, Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Know The Galaxy Being

.  
You Know The Guests Ever Ride the Broken Wing Across Five Days to Justice

.  
Go Read the Bottom of Silence

.  
We'll Let You Follow the Old Red Fire Witch

.  
The Cruellest Sea of Strange Particles

.  
Make Him Sleep on a Warrior

.  
Kiss the Wake of Fear

A Cage in Search of Mischief  
[END]

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i and 1](#) Zack Handlen  
12/12/09 12:37am

THE PRIME DIRECTIVE  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

I don't think that destroying an oncoming asteroid and saving a planet and its life-forms from destruction comes close to violating the prime directive. The prime directive isn't there to just generally prevent the Federation from playing God, it is there to prevent \*cultural\* interference. Saving the people would not harm the culture or affect its development.

I am a low-level Trekkie, and I'm embarrassed to point this out. I don't even know the name of the blue guy race with the antenna things (The Ambrolusian??), so I don't mean to lecture on this—I was just surprised at the reference to the Prime Directive in the third paragraph.

[Reply](#)

- [i and 1](#) i and 1  
12/12/09 12:39am

The antennae are tube-like... Are they the "Fallopians?" maybe?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#) i and 1  
12/12/09 12:10pm

They're the Andorians, 'cause they're from Andor. You know, like the Ewoks.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#) i and 1  
12/12/09 8:19pm

I thought Andarrans were green - and Kirk is forever shagging the sexy ones!

[Reply](#)

- [i and 1](#) i and 1  
12/12/09 10:46pm

Nope. THAT one, I know:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#) i and 1  
12/14/09 7:43pm

Ah. I stand corrected, i+1. So in the STAR TREK reboot, Kirk's shagging an Orion Starfleet student? But they're also slavers and pirates? Boy - and to think of the stink over Nog being a Ferengi in Starfleet!

[Reply](#)

- [i and 1](#) i and 1  
12/14/09 8:20pm

Yeah, I thought the same thing (without Nog being a part of the thought, I haven't seen most DS9 eps).



[Reply](#)

- [Bob Ki](#) and I

12/15/09 12:43pm

He's not saying that saving the planet is a Prime Directive violation, just that beaming down to the planet first seems like a bad idea given the PD.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

12/11/09 10:33am

The Inner Light-lite

I'm following along with these as they're reviewed and I hadn't seen them in many a long moon. When I watched it, The Paradise Syndrome reminded me of the TNG episode The Inner Light in the basic story idea. The idea of Kirk living as Kirok and getting married and even knocking the chick up and then the (blandly) sad ending...Of course, it's mostly silly compared to the TNG episode. Some of it is likely the acting differences between Shatner and Stewart. Also the fact that the TNG episode invested a hell of a lot more time in Picard's story than the TOS episode did. And it was neat to see the flute referenced in TNG subsequent to this episode while. I never liked The Paradise Syndrome.

And The Children Shall Lead spooked me as a kid. (But then again, many of those Tom Baker Doctor Who episodes spooked me as a kid too). It was also unnerving to see Kirk have a damn panic attack. But the episode is mostly silliness with some hilarious moments.

Evomer tnanetueil uruhu and kcops dna enifnoc meht ot sretrauq! Did you hear me?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)St. God

12/11/09 12:46pm

Also the Inner Light is one of the best episodes of all Star Trek, period.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God

12/11/09 3:06pm

Everything reminds me of Puffinstuff.. And writing backwards is a fools game!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)St. God

12/11/09 5:13pm

The difference between this and TIL is the commitment to the premise. in TIL, about 90% of the show takes place in the alternate reality. after the first commercial break we're already 5 years into Picards alternate life, and it only goes deeper from there. really, after the first act we don't even need the plot back on the enterprise, but I guess they put that in there for people who tuned in during the commercial breaks. The almost cinematic focus on Picard's story really sells it for me. in comparison Kirk's 60 days with the indians seems like a hollow execution of a bottom of the barrel plot idea.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)St. God

12/12/09 1:34pm

I'd say TIL is Trek's most overrated episode but I'm just looking for a fight.

No, actually, I mean it: TIL is okay but nothing special. Also, by cutting back to the bridge, it ruins the Shyamalan twist, something TNG was good at doing—"All Good Things" did it too by starting the episode on the Enterprise rather than in old Picard's vineyard.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)St. God  
12/12/09 8:05pm

Well, seeing as TNG is Trek's most overrated series, its most overrated episode would therefore be Trek's most overrated as a whole...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 1:03pm

Yer Blues..

Well Zach, I was quite taken with the blues analogy, and kudos for admitting it wasn't yours, but your evolution as to why, in fact, it truly was yours was beautiful.. laugh of the day... Thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/11/09 4:30pm

I thought that to be true of nearly all Star Trek children, including but not limited to Charlie X, Ensign Riley, that Charlie X guy from TNG, Alexander Worf, Wesley, these children, the children in Miri, Jake Sisko, Nog, Data's kid, Ducat's kid, O'Brien's kid, Ensign Travis, Harry Kim and all of the Skywalker kids (ok, I'm piling on a bit with that last one).

I enjoyed the fine performance of Naomi Wildman and thought Ezri Dax was hot (and age appropriate at the time).

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/11/09 6:38pm

Let's not forget that "the children in Miri" included Kim Darby and Michael J. Pollard, both playing children who (according to the story) cannot have reached puberty - and both actors were so good that no one cared that they obviously were not themselves prepubescent.

As for "And the Children...", about the only element of enduring value I find in it is the George Dunning musical score - his first one of the third season, but soon to be outdone by his music for "The Empath" and "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" (which were shot consecutively but were first broadcast some weeks apart - why do I know this stuff?).

All four third-season episodes discussed by our host thus far included a good deal of new music, as do the two I just named as well as "Elaan of Troyius," "Spectre of the Gun," and a few others. Many of their music cues were re-edited and used for the remainder of the season, although I don't think any of the music from "Spectre," "Children," or "Paradise" was reused.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/12/09 8:57am

And boner appropriate!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/12/09 1:35pm

Excellent!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/02/10 2:15am

I love most of the TOS music, but I hated all of George Duning's music for the show. Most of those episodes where he did the music are among my least favorite episodes, especially The Empath which sets my teeth on edge. In Truth No Beauty is the exception, still an interesting episode, but the music really detracts for me.

Paradise Syndrome had a lovely score by Gerald Fried (of Amok Time). That music has been re-scored as a concert piece and is available on CD, re-arranged and conducted by Tony Bremner. (Paired with the score from Is There In Truth No Beauty)

I know it's shamefully, obviously, manipulatively tear-jerking, BUT. The very end of this episode is actually moving. Kirk sits with Miramanee as she dies, and then continues to sit with her as the credits roll. I think he brushes back her hair or something. He doesn't emote, he just sits with her, and Fried's music does most of the work (a big swell from the strings for the moment she actually kicks), and they stay with him as the credits roll. It's a gentle, wonderful handling of that ending, it really works much better than the episode as a whole did.

(Bremner's re-arrangement doesn't have the big string moment in the "Death of Miramanee" section, a big oversight.)

A thousand things work to undercut that ending, including the pinup-model pose Zack commented on. When Dr House works to save someone's life, you can tell that the patient has been worked on. Dr McCoy, not so much. But the ~2 minutes of the episode after the last line of dialog has been spoken, have always struck me as very well done. They almost redeem the episode.

Jeff Bond points out that Fried did more "American Indian" scoring in the TV movies "I Will Fight No More Forever" and "The Mystic Warrior".

Season 3 had a lot of hot chicks in it. Miramanee's an excellent example.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen  
12/12/09 1:27pm

F for both

One is a bad boring and the other is just bad. Seriously, "Children" may very well be Star Trek's worst outing—I can only think of five episodes that rival it in awfulness. A B+? I'm still shivering.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Lord Running Clam  
12/12/09 8:03pm

Naah, this isn't as bad as "The Alternative Factor."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Lord Running Clam  
12/12/09 11:10pm

I have to agree with Ringo on this one.

We have even worse episodes waiting in the wings as Season 3 progresses. Syndication always seemed to mix the seasons, diluting the good stretches with the many third season clunkers. It's been interesting to now watch these in the order they were originally aired.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Lord Running Clam  
12/13/09 12:03am

I know what you mean about syndication. I'm 37 now, and I first saw the syndicated episodes out-of-order... unless by sheer coincidence they were ever broadcast in order. Also, has anyone mentioned the subject of syndication cuts? The Nitpicker's Guide addresses the issue in a typically, and entertainingly, plenary manner. When I was about 5 years old, I saw Spock smash the computer monitor in "Amok Time." From that time forward until UPN or SyFy (which was the much more sensibly-named SciFi back then) aired unedited episodes in the 1990s or 2000s, the "trimmed" edition \*lacking\* the monitor-bashing was the only version available, AFAICT. That's a pretty darned specific thing to imagine/ confabulate, and I'm relieved that my memory did not play a trick on me.

I'm pretty sure you can tell the seasons apart by either the typeface used, or by the color of the lettering during the opening title sequence.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Rex](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 10:19am

Also very silly and not well thought out?  
This review.

Boom, roasted.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Rex  
12/11/09 10:34am

You cut me to the quick, sir.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Rex  
12/11/09 11:08am

Well, not one mention of how much the Gargan's fist-shaking looks like the wanker sign?

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Rex  
12/11/09 11:10am

Congratulations, Rex, you win Handlen's job.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Rex  
12/11/09 11:27am

@BH: I thought about it, but I settled for mentioning the MST3K element instead. But yeah. It's... something.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 10:32am

I prefer the term  
Injuns. Its more fun to say.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/11/09 11:09am

I enjoy Al Swearengen's markedly more combative "Heathen fuckin' dirt-worshippers". Although not in polite coversation, obviously.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/11/09 8:41pm

I know the PC police hate Huckleberry Finn for the N-word, but when will the get around to banning Tom Sawyer for the inclusion of that half-breed Injun Joe?

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Dumbledore Calrissian  
12/12/09 7:57pm

Oh, I don't know - if you drop the F-bomb part of Swearengen's name, it's probably how they're routinely described on Fox News!

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 1:46pm

I Never Like Either One of These Episodes

But what's weird is that while I barely remember "The Paradise Syndrome," (not to be confused with "The Immunity Syndrome" or "This Side of Paradise" the former of which is one of my favorites and the latter of which is, er not), I remember far too much about those fist-pounding kids and their doughy guy ghost leader.

And Space Knives? Really? Space Knives?

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)barefoot jim  
12/11/09 2:13pm

Er, that should be "Never Liked Either One of These Episodes." Not that anyone cares.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim  
12/11/09 3:14pm

i do. i really, really do.

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Greene](#)barefoot jim  
12/16/09 2:07am

You know what's hilarious? The kids' "fist-pumping action" looks suspiciously like the "jack-off" gesture, which I don't think was intentional...

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen  
12/12/09 10:32am

"He's dead, Jim."

I'm forced to agree with haters of And The Children Will Lead, just because child actors from the '60s and early

'70s are almost always unbearable, much like child actors today. But to be honest, I've only seen that one a couple of times, because for some reason it was never included in the syndication package that ran on WFLD in Chicago when I were a lad.

The thing that strikes me as odd about The Paradise Syndrome is that (as Zack points out) Kirk performs CPR to revive the drowned kid. It's only recently started to bother me that McCoy never, ever does this — even on dead people that he's given only a cursory examination to.

I know they didn't try very hard to get the medicine (or the science) right on sci-fi shows in the olden days, but SOMEBODY on that set had to know basic first aid techniques, and having it included in this episode only makes its absence in all the others more jarring.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Ajax  
12/12/09 1:41pm

SNARKY RESPONSE:

In the future, scientists will realize that first aid does nothing.

Bones, as a future doctor, knows this, and therefore can tell from a glance that someone is a goner. Kirk, as a layman, is ignorant about such things and therefore does that which is futile.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Ajax  
12/12/09 1:42pm

NERDY RESPONSE:

Bones does CPR on Chancellor Gorkon in Star Trek VI.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 11:46am

Did anyone else?

Wear a garbage bag covered by their mom's doily and call themselves the Gorgon?

No?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
12/11/09 4:56pm

No. Just you.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
12/11/09 8:44pm

Oh, Sheldon!

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
12/11/09 8:44pm

And that is why I hate Trick or Treating

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 12:30pm

Triangle, Man?

Sorry man, but dem redskins lived in CIRCLES, not triangles.. Check out "Black Elk Speaks", at the very least... he is very eloquent on the subject of the square world versus the circles...

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/11/09 1:10pm

But why does Triangle Man hate Particle Man?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
12/11/09 3:13pm

What's important is who wins, and what their watches are like.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 11:52am

Hey, Zack!

There's way too much already posted over on the pop culture geek self-discovery article, so I'm going to drop this in here:

Handlen, you are one sweet, cool motherfucker.

Also, thanks for responding to me tweet last month. Who responds to a tweet from a random guy he's not even following? ZHANDLEN, that's who!

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Dino  
12/11/09 12:12pm

Bow down before the mighty ZHANDLEN!

[Reply](#)

- [Just Nut Up and Die Alone](#)Zack Handlen  
3/28/16 7:10am

Sorry, but Zach is right and everybody else is wrong: 'Children' is at least tolerable, while 'Paradise' is excruciating. And I genuinely think everyone who is disagreeing hasn't actually watched them in a while.

The only, and I mean only, good thing about 'Paradise' is the pretty scenery. The rest is an unbearable melange of '60s offensiveness and plot contrivances and appalling acting and yes, I know all TOS episodes could be described that way, but what saves the show normally - the energy and charm of and between the central characters - is completely absent from this episode.

Kirk's plot could have been interesting in other hands, but between the flat (and frankly thoroughly offensive - the scene where Kirk is making lamps and teaching them about irrigation?!) portrayal of the Native American characters and Shatner's terrible, terrible acting - seriously, the bit when he spreads his arms wide, fingers splayed, then hugs himself? - it completely lacks any weight. That's largely rooted in the fact that it doesn't feel like 'Kirk' at all. I know at the beginning of the episode he mumbles something about how great it is to be away from command decisions etc., but watching TOS (for the first time) we've never been given any sense of that being a real conflict inside Kirk, that somewhere internally he aches to be free of his responsibilities - quite the contrary, in fact; Kirk wears command extraordinarily lightly and actively fights to keep it in his own hands even when it's ridiculous to do so (the ageing episode?!). For the ending to have any weight, you'd have to (a) care about Mirumane, for which she would have to be given some kind of ... personality or humanity or agency or, you know, character, or (b) you'd have to feel the weight of Kirk's responsibilities settling on him again, you know? There would have to be some kind of sense that his life on Native American Planet was

something that he might have chosen, rather than something he just blunders into. That's why the episode where Spock gets stung by space bees or whatever ('This Side of Paradise') has ... something, because Spock is actually expressing a part of himself, feeling and doing things he somewhere deep inside longs to do, and the episode acknowledges that.

(Also, I had no sympathy for 'Kirok'. He was with the tribe or whatever for two months, accepting their tribute etc. on the basis that he could save them from extinction, and then had zero plans for dealing with the fact that he couldn't? What a monumental dick. What an obelisk.)

Having said all of the above, it's the interactions between McCoy and Spock that are the most unforgivable and condemn 'Paradise' above all. McCoy is generally annoying - I get the idea, that he's supposed to represent passion and emotion, but in practice that generally works out as him whining at Spock about how he should feel bad while Spock acts perfectly reasonably - but he's absolutely unbearable in this episode. Everything Spock does, and I mean everything (including obsessing over the obelisk - I don't know why it's described as 'a Vulcan hunch' when of course it has everything to do with the captain's disappearance etc., last seen going to inspect it!) is completely sensible and reasonable and to have McCoy nagging and flagellating him about it is ... infuriating. And pathetic.

I could go on and on about how bad this episode is. Ugh. Terrible. I'm not saying 'And the Children Shall Lead' is particularly good TOS, but it's tolerable. It's got an energy and a flow to it, a certain level of creepiness and there's a darkness in the final resolution which makes it memorable.

And yes, I've read the Agony Booth article. It just criticizes 'Children' for all the stuff every TOS episode (except the very, very few actually good ones) is guilty of.

Zach is right.

You are wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/14 10:52am

I don't know why but I actually found The Paradise Syndrome slightly moving. Maybe it was seeing Kirk happy, even if it was all slightly ridiculous. And I actually felt bad that his wife died at the end. Again, ridiculous, but just the fact that Kirk married her and she was pregnant with his baby... that was definitely not something I would have expected out of the series (marriage and future baby)... so anyhow, it had its faults, for sure, but I still sorta enjoyed it nevertheless. More so than some episodes that got far better reviews. At least it was different enough at this stage of the game as to not be a simple retread of past episodes.

[Reply](#)

- [Prankster](#)Zack Handlen  
12/13/09 5:32pm

Season Three

I think the reason this season is pegged as so lousy is because it opens with a spate of crummy episodes, but later on I think there are some that are as good as any others the show produced (including the two slotted for next week). There's even the one episode where they actually wear space suits. And then there's "Plato's Stepchildren", which is terrible, but in a glorious, hilarious way.

[Reply](#)

- [Mr Tea](#)Zack Handlen  
6/10/11 7:11am

Uhura's Mirror

Hey, Zack. Thanks for a great review. I haven't seen the Children episode for at least 25 years, but you brought it all back for me, fresh and fragrant. In answer to your question: '...why the hell does Uhura have a mirror on her console, anyway?' - obviously the mirror, just like the reflection in it, is an illusion. Duh!



[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 8:22pm

Sure, those 2 guys got beamed out into space...

But what about the guys they were trying to bring back from the planet? They never went back to Triacus. So those guys just get to hang out with some gravestones until they starve to death?

I kind of want to write a story about them.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 10:15am

These are very sensitive instruments!

I will not have you upset their delicate balance! We would all be lost! Forever lost! Go away, now. Go away or we'll kill you!

(This episode has all kinds of great quotes that I still remember to this day.)

[Reply](#)

- [trlkly](#)Zack Handlen  
5/25/13 1:50pm

The thing I don't get is Zack giving both of the episodes he likes a B+ this season. But last season, a B+ on "Bread and Circuses" meant it was mediocre crap.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Zack Handlen  
12/12/09 12:22am

The Gorgan

Is it just my imagination, or was every evil godlike specter on the old ST series named The Gorgan?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Zack Handlen  
12/12/09 8:26am

You give the absolute worst episode of Trek...

...the same grade as "The Menagerie"? I knew it couldn't last.

[Reply](#)

- [pico79](#)Zack Handlen  
12/11/09 1:34pm

\*Cultural cacheT

Cheers!

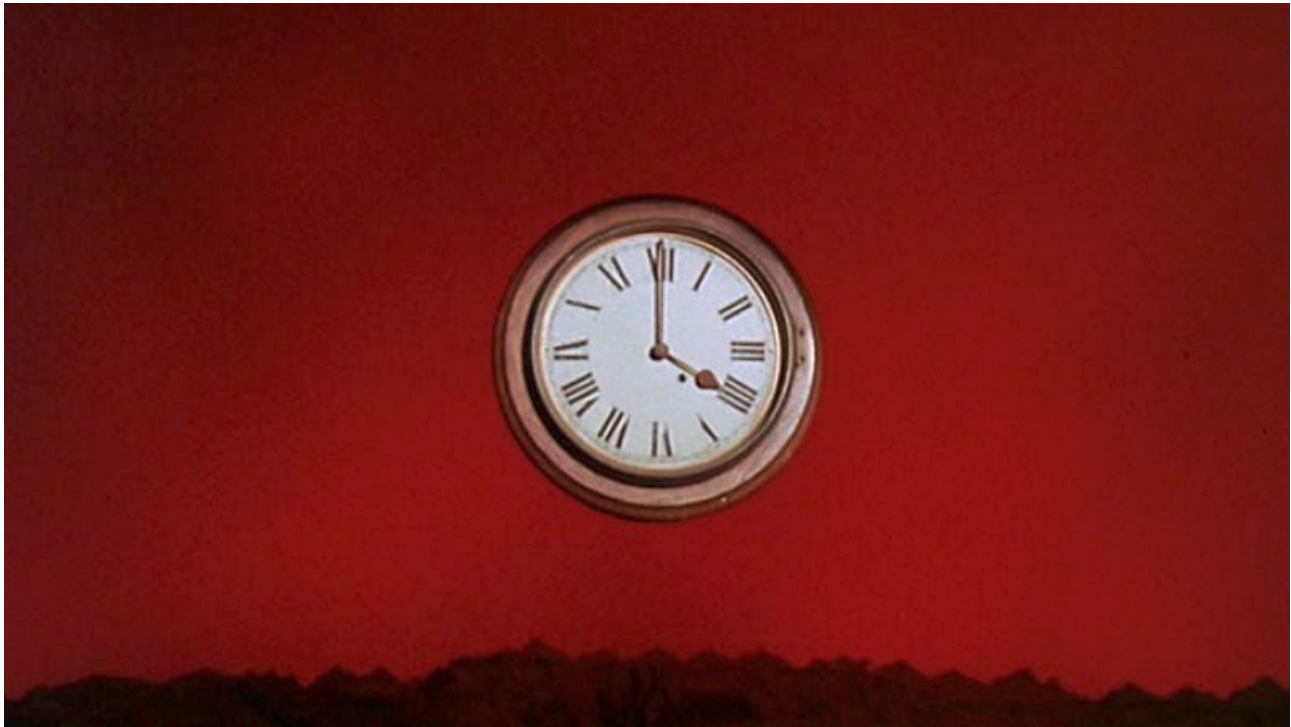
[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Is There In Truth No Beauty?"/"The Spectre Of The Gun"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published December 18, 2009

[Comments \(106\)](#)



I'm wondering if I should try an experiment when we come back from break (in case you haven't checked a calendar recently, the next two Fridays are holidays, so no *Trek* till the new year)—maybe I should change the order I watch these episodes, or put more space between them, or, I dunno, get really drunk. Because once again, of the two-pack we're covering today, the first was lousy, and the second was, if not exactly a classic, at least highly enjoyable. I'm not sure if that's just coincidence, or related to the lowered expectations that inevitably follow a mediocre episode. You'd think my expectations would be at their absolute minimum by this point, but impressively, season three of *Trek* keeps finding new ways to disappoint.

Which is especially frustrating because "Is There In Truth No Beauty?" *could've* been good. With the exception of "Spock's Brain," I'm of the opinion that everything we've seen so far had at least some potential in the opening scenes, and "Beauty" starts very strong, with one of my favorite concepts in science fiction: the difficulties inherent in contact with alien races. The *Enterprise* has met their fair share of oddities, but the Medusans that we see in "Beauty" are, up until Spock mind melds with one, eerie, and inexplicable in a way that makes the concept of friendly relations seem not just ludicrous but practically irrelevant. McCoy has some talk about how the race's scientific advances could be of great benefit to the Federation, but what's the common ground? Any human dumb enough to try and view a Medusan goes immediately, violently insane. For the few glimpses we get, the creatures don't even have physical form, just a series of weird, flashing lights. Communication requires a shared point of reference to proceed, and it's hard to imagine what that could possibly be here.

Still, Starfleet has yet to take "unreasonably difficult" as an answer, and is sending an ambassador, Dr. Miranda Jones, to the Medusan home planet to negotiate a relationship between the two groups. Diana Muldaur, who plays Jones, also played the only *Star Trek: Next Generation* character to eclipse fan-loathing of Tasha Yar, Doctor Pulaski, a stand-in for Beverly Crusher who attempt to recreate the McCoy-Spock relationship by constantly dismissing, insulting, and condescending to *Next Gen*'s break-out android, Data. She's a trifle more likable here, but only because the "Beauty"'s scatter-shot writing makes you feel like the actress is at least doing as good as she can by an playable character. Jones' obsession with her Medusan colleague, Kollos, has tremendous potential, because it's a relationship that can be tragic

and creepy at the same time, but it requires a subtle hand to make us understand why Jones would care so deeply for someone she can't touch, and also understand how such a need might not be entirely healthy. So, that's not really going to happen here.

It's hard to follow exactly what themes this episode is pushing, anyway. There's the ever stressed contrast between Jones's beauty and Kollos's supposed "ugliness," although nobody really gets into just how relative such standards are even when they're not being applied to a different species. (Plus, not to be rude about it, but Muldaur, while pretty, isn't a stunner, and the constant references to her stunning-ness had me expecting a third act reveal involving her telepathy and some subtle mind control on the men around her. We did get a decent twist, but that was not it.) Watching Kirk, McCoy, and engineer Mavrick, who came up with Miranda and has some kind of desperate crush on her, throw themselves at the doctor's feet is bad enough, but the way each man in turn blames her for her supposed "coldness" is just irritating and stupid. We've talked about *Trek's* sexism before, and I have no doubt we'll talk about it again, but it's regrettable that such a generally forward thinking show would fall back on the old "If she doesn't want me, it's *her* fault!" cliché.

That's stating it too baldly—Mavrick is clearly unsettled even before he gets a glimpse at Kollos—but there is a basic understanding that there's something wrong with an attractive woman committing her life to working in an environment where that attractiveness will go unappreciated. Kirk lectures her about human contact, about want to be loved, and while there's something in what he says, the assumption that she hasn't thought this through before, that she has to be somehow damaged to want to do what she does, is unfortunate, especially in light of the episode's big reveal. We don't find out Jones is blind until after the half-way point, and that seems to resolve the question, because blindness clearly justifies her choices in a way that Kirk can understand. (In McCoy's defense, he knew all along, and still bugged her about it. So, he's consistent.)

Really, though, Jones contradictory character (or is it simple opacity? Muldaur manages to invest her with enough complexity that she isn't a complete waste, at least), isn't as much a problem as the script's refusal to focus. First we get the Medusans, which is already enough of a topic for an hour, then we get Mavrick driven insane by his unrequited love for Jones, deciding to kill Kollos and then going even more insane and screwing up the *Enterprise's* warp drive to launch the ship into unexplored space. (And hey, it's the barrier at the edge of the galaxy!) Spock has to merge minds with Kollos, who's the only being on board capable of successfully piloting the ship back to where it came from. (I've never really bought that the Sulu has *that* much control over the equipment, but whatever.) Then Spock gets his own glimpse of the creature, goes a little mad, and Jones has to bring him back, despite being terribly jealous that he seems closer to Kollos than she can ever be.

Summing it up, it doesn't sound so bad, but watching it, things kept veering all over the place, and Jones was never a strong enough center to hold all these impulses together. Nimoy's performance as the Spock/Kollos hybrid is passable (although it is always so damn creepy when he smiles), but the character talks in trite one-liners, and Kollos himself (?) is more a plot MacGuffin than a being, trapped in a box, alone among a race that he can't see or communicate with for fear of destroying them. Instead, all the pathos is focused on Jones, who just can't support it. It's more like a group of men who try and interpret the problems they assume she has than any conflict within her that drives the episode, and that makes the whole thing detached and frustrating to watch. Plus, Spock's IDIC medallion, a blatant attempt by Gene Roddenberry to move some merchandise, is just embarrassing.

"Spectre of the Gun" isn't free of the plot-holes that have plagued this season (well, okay, every season, but they seem a little more obvious these days), but it has style, and a strong concept, and that makes it a winner. It's the only episode from the third season I can remember watching before, as the set of the half-finished Tombstone, AZ, really stayed with me when I was a kid. I was worried it wouldn't hold up, but while the story cheats a little, and we're dealing with yet another race of god-like beings who've decided to screw around with our heroes (in the Melkotians defense, Kirk really is asking for it this time), the look and feel of the ep is so striking that I'm willing to cut it a good deal of slack.

Most eps of the original *Trek*—and, really, of any genre show—doe their best to hide or ignore the limits of budget and effects technology. Characters are steadfast in their inability to see rubber skin, nylon costumes, or that the rocks they're using as cover from enemy fire are the same rocks they hid behind last week, and the week before that, and so on. It's

part of the deal the show makes with the audience: everybody knows this is made up, we'll give you as much as we can, and you'll agree to look the other way if the cave wall wobbles when someone leans on it. "Spectre" is striking because it requires no such concessions. Okay, the glowing kitchen appliance that the *Enterprise* first encounters on its way to visit the Melkotians is maybe goofy, and the floating brain with the glowing eyes that threatens Kirk doesn't really seem to move in any recognizable way. But once Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Scotty, and Chekov are transported to the fake Western town, the store-fronts with no backs are clearly visible to *everyone*. The stated reason is that the Melkotians created the environment out of pieces from Kirk's mind, but like a lot of the set-up here, that's not really important. (Actually, it will turn out to be important during the climax, but that has its own problems.) What's important is that for the first time, we find ourselves in a place that seems truly alien, because enough of it is familiar that you can't dismiss the things that *aren't* familiar.

Another aspect of "Spectre" that works well is the *High Noon*-esque feeling of doom that hangs over our heroes once they arrive in Tombstone. The townsfolk immediately recognize Kirk and the others as the Clanton Gang, the real life men who were gunned down by the Earps and Doc Holliday at the OK Corral. And wouldn't you know it, today just happens to be the day of the gunfight, and the Earps are really not open to negotiation. Kirk tries to talk his way out of the situation, but nothing works, and as the clock ticks closer to the 5:00 deadline, it becomes more and more obvious that nothing they do will change what's going to happen.

I'm not always a fan of fatalist plots. It gets boring watching futility for too long, especially if there's no point to the futility other than to remind us that hey, sometimes you just lose. (Really? I had no idea!) Here it's used to great effect. Obviously the *Enterprise* boys are going to find a way out of their situation; Chekov's "death" is surprising even now, but even if you didn't know he made it through all the movies, you'd still be comfortable in the knowledge that Kirk and Spock and McCoy would live to fight another day. But there's still that awful, shuffling death approaching, and our heroes are isolated enough that you don't feel that same safety net that direct contact with the ship (and by extension, the Federation) implies. The whole ep often feels like a dream, and while we've been seeing weird camera angles and editing the whole season (check out the fish-eye lens during the crazy fights in "Beauty"), here what were liabilities, or at least distractions, become strengths. "Spectre" is best when it stares down the vicious, hate-filled faces of the Earp brothers, or when the wind roars, or when Kirk pounds at the door of a Sheriff's office that's all one wall. It works best when it's easiest for us to imagine it as a nightmare we haven't yet had.

On the down side, the plot does get sticky. Chekov's stupid infatuation with a local girl, and Kirk's apparent willingness to indulge that infatuation, is par for the course with the show, and at least here we get the satisfaction of seeing Chekov punished for his immaturity. Kirk's insistence on making contact with the Melkotians even after being formally warned away is, again, typical, and it's not like his arrogance doesn't pay off in the end. The biggest hole is in Spock's solution to the problem of the non-working tranquilizer. Spock and McCoy put together a sleep grenade to use on the Earps during the showdown, but when they test the grenade on Scotty, it has no effect. Spock argues that because the tranquilizer *should* have worked, that means they are in a place where the physical laws only operate if Kirk and the rest believe they do. So Chekov "died" because he believed the bullets would kill him. So long as you don't believe in bullets, you should be fine.

This is a little lazy (and haven't we been down the "it's all in your mind!" road before? It's such a well-worn genre cliché that I can't imagine this is our first time), but it's actually directly contradicted by the very proof Spock uses. Scotty believed the tranquilizer would affect him, because they all said it was certain to work; therefore, by Spock's logic, it *should* have knocked him out. The only way it wouldn't is if the Melkotians were controlling the illusion and didn't want the sleep grenade to be effective.

So, I have to knock what would've been an A minus episode down to a B plus, for that inconsistency, and for a general looseness of the writing overall. But the final showdown is impressive, no matter how shaky the reasoning behind it, and it's nice to see the weird, arrhythmic vibe working for the show for once. Whenever a TV series starts to lose its center, it can be depressing to watch something that used to be glorious (or at least consistently entertaining) falling to pieces, but if you're patient, and don't mind sitting through some clunkers, there's nearly always at least a few bits and pieces that manage a certain dying glory. "Spectre" is one of those. "Beauty"... isn't.

**Grades:****"Is There In Truth No Beauty?": C+****"Spectre of the Gun": B+****Stray Observations:**

- Apologies if this recap is a little more confused than usual. I'm moving today, tomorrow, and over the weekend, and just spent an hour getting my cable re-connected, so I'm distracted, is all.
- The fish-eye lens fights *were* cool, I'll give "Beauty" that much. The effect's been over-used, but it can work.
- We're gone till January 8th, and then it's "Day of the Dove" and the awesomely named, "For The World Is Hollow And I Have Touched The Sky"

**DISCUSSION**

- Community (104)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 10:29am

A new theory!

I've decided that Gene Rodenberry believed there are only four possible female types, one of each of which was played by Majel Barrett:

- 1) Cold shrew (Number One, original pilot)
- 2) Competent professional with hidden longing (Nurse Chapel)
- 3) Wacky sex machine (Luxanna Troi)
- 4) Voice of computer.

Take any TOS or TNG woman character (especially guest stars), and I'd bet they fit into one of these four categories.

[1](#)[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 10:37am

Holy shit that's a good theory.

What category is Whoopi Goldberg? I'm hoping not wacky sex machine.

[Reply](#)

- [J. Goo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 10:42am

That's not as bad as wondering what her hidden longing was. My guess: Keiko (Chief O'Brien's wife). I wonder if there's slash fic for that yet ...

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 10:43am

Deanna Troy?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 10:46am

Pretty sure Whoopi would be "Voice of Computer."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 10:53am

Man, if we're having fun talking about sexism in TOS now, just wait till Turnabout Intruder.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:05am

I think you've definitely hit upon something here.

The only character I can think of that doesn't fit is Deanna Troi, but that's only because she's primarily an incompetent professional with hidden longing.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:09am

Muldaur in ITITNB would be "cold shrew." I guess the chick (who was sexy, by the way - why did Checkov get the good looking chicks) in SOTG would be "wacky sex machine"?

And of course Zack makes a good point about women in TOS, especially with regard to the idea that they are usually expected to fall in love with the man or, otherwise, they are as Muldaur is regarded in this episode or, say, the "walking freezer unit" in Where No Man Has Gone Before (who did, in the end, start to fall for Mitchell I guess).

I think there's room for ambiguity in there...Whoopi supposedly had a lot more going on with her than they told (remember what Q told Picard). Maybe a 5th category could be a woman with some sort of hidden agenda or background. TNG seemed to play with these concepts a bit more, but that possibly holds up your Roddenberry idea since he had less to do with the show at that point.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:09am

I think you're right, but the sad thing is that's still more diversity than you get from most television today. These days, it's pretty much cold shrew and hot, horny housewife.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [OnanRulz](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:24am

I thought Guinan's category was "Magical Negro."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:37am

Eh, TNG women got a much fairer shake than TOS women. Or at least a more believable combination of the four archetypes. Like "competent sex computer."

The guest stars often started out cold and then revealed some warmth, which got a little old (not to mention they tended to dress like Dorothy Zbornak), but the producers were very mindful of sexism. The female leads, once they settled on what Troi was supposed to be, were solid and well-rounded.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:53am

Wasn't the bulk of Whoopi Goldberg's appearances post-Roddenberry? This might be why she doesn't fit the Four Categories for Successful Trek Women.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:53am

Dammit, you just made me look up Dorothy Zbornak, and it's right on the nose. I've never been a fan of Star Trek's costume design, but you may have permanently stained my conception of all female Star Trek characters now.

Also, the solidity and well-roundedness of the female Star Trek leads, as well as things like finally settling on what Troi was supposed to be are, I think, directly correlated with the lack of Roddenberry's input in later shows.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:56am

"Solid and well-rounded"

I see what you did there.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 12:30pm

"What category is Whoopi Goldberg?"

He said "FEMALE types".

[Reply](#)

- [Curtis E. Bear](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 1:05pm

The Competent Sex Computer is the true promise of a better future.

Also, obligatorily: not a bad band name.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 1:27pm

Rodenberry had a weird sex thing going on, that might feed into this. I remember some friends of mine went to cons back right before TNG came out, and Majel for some reason made a point of noting the Ferengi penis was quite capable of pleasing a human female. I shit you not.

Then again, maybe that was her idea, considering where Luxanna went.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 2:10pm

Troi wasn't competent? I thought she did her ill-defined job very well.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 2:47pm

@Sheldon Coopers Libido: I thought Sigourney Weaver did a better job at it.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 4:14pm

Let's face it, the holodeck was the most competent sex computer.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 4:51pm

within the context of the Star Trek Universe, I'm sure Troi was plenty competent. But if you look at her as a character on a tv show, she wasn't really given the chance to demonstrate any real competence. It was all " Captain, I'm sensing a high level of stress among the crew" and random crap like that.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:17pm

THERE ARE FOUR FEMALE MODELS.

THEY LOOK AND FEEL HUMAN.

TWO OF THEM ARE PROGRAMMED TO THINK THEY ARE HUMAN.

ONE OF THEM IS PROGRAMMED TO THINK SHE'S A BETAZOID.

ONE OF THEM IS PROGRAMMED TO THINK THAT IT'S A COMPUTER... which is pretty much what, uh, goes on with computers (programming and stuff), so... I guess I'd better stop now. My theory looked so promising at first!

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/19/09 11:45am

Chekov got the good looking chicks because Walter Koenig looked like a member of the Monkees, a hot TV show at the time; that's why he was cast.

The Chekov character is Russian because someone pointed out to Roddenberry that Soviets are leaders in space exploration.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 10:06am

What can I do, Captain? You know we're always supposed to maintain good relations with the natives I love Spectre of the Gun. It plays surprisingly well as a western, and I love the Twilight Zone-esque sets. All the budgetary issues that TOS had, this was effective use of not having much money. The ending is as you say slightly unsatisfying, but how else could they have ended it?

Is There In Truth No Beauty? isn't terribly fondly remembered by me, but watching it again, it's not as bad as I thought it was. It's an interesting concept at least. But not a great episode. That Diana Muldaur was a fox back then.



Don't love her! Don't love her! She'll kill you if you love her... I love you, Miranda.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
12/18/09 10:59am

I'm not saying she was that hot, but holy crap did she fall apart between TOS and TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God  
12/18/09 11:04am

Yeah. I've never seen 20 years of natural aging hit anyone harder.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)St. God  
12/18/09 11:20am

Totally agree that Spectre has a really Twilight Zone feel to it, and benefits from it immensely. In the 3rd season of Trek there's just a little too much of seen-it-before, and although the mid-controlling aliens have been seen before (The Cage/The Menagerie springs immediately to mind), this is a lovely play on the theme. One of the best of S3 and also a nice ensemble piece as well. I'm paraphrasing someone else here but this story gave Trek's borders a push, it's remarkable just how far they moved.

As for Is There In Truth... meh. There's better in S3 and there's worse, I can't really summon up enough enthusiasm to love or hate it. Although I always liked Diana (yes even in TNG...), she's an interesting actor who seems to have the ability to fill out the most cardboard of characters (and not just in Trek). I'm not 100% sure, but I think this ep also qualifies as TOS at it's most sexist - how COULD a beautiful woman not understand how men need to appreciate her?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)St. God  
12/18/09 11:54am

I'm with y'all. Spectre is one of the few Season 3 episodes I remember vividly, and a lot of it has to do with the unfinished state of Wild West World.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
12/18/09 1:22pm

I totally agree that, if they did this on the Gunsmoke back lot or something, it really wouldn't work. Instead of Doc Holliday you'd get Mel Sharples in a fedora.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
12/18/09 1:32pm

I guess the Whedonites are either sleeping in to watch Dollhouse tonite or still working the lunch shift at Burger King, so I'll make the Spectre of the Gun and Firefly comparison. This episode had better effects but worse whores than Firefly.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
12/18/09 1:39pm

Firefly had perfectly fine effects, thank you.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
12/18/09 1:48pm

I had to come up with something to balance out the whores. Nobody wants unbalanced whores.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
12/18/09 1:55pm

Sometimes you just need to push the Comedy Abort button. I know its difficult.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
12/18/09 2:02pm

You're right. I was going to make a joke about (Comedy) Abortions being a difficult choice.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
12/18/09 2:45pm

I applaud your restraint.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)St. God  
12/18/09 11:56pm

As a kid I thought the idea of "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" was awesome (OK, so I hadn't heard of Lovecraft yet) with some cool twists. "Spectre of the Gun" was kind of entertaining in a silly way, but I really didn't want to see our crew plopped into a literal western (The O.K. Corral? You're pulling my leg, right?). Still feel that way today.

Nothing comes close, though, to the jaw-dropping stupidity of "President Lincoln, why don't you fight Genghis Khan?" coming up later this season.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)St. God  
12/19/09 12:34am

Both these eps were pretty "meh" to me. "Gun" suffers from the same plot device used in "Arena," the one with the midget, and the one with space Lincoln. "Truth" is pretty much as Zach described it: good concept, crummy execution.

As for Dr. Pulaski: the only character to eclipse the fan-loathing of Tasha Yar? Denise Crosby wasn't around long enough to loathe. Besides, the most hated of TNG character had to have been Wesley Crusher. I got the feeling that not even Dr. Crusher liked him. Why do you think she transferred to Starfleet Medical HQ in the 2nd season?

[Reply](#)

- [Necron-99](#)St. God  
12/19/09 7:31pm

"Diana Muldaur, who plays Jones, also played the only Star Trek: Next Generation character to eclipse fan-loathing of Tasha Yar"

Um... Wesley Crusher?

[Reply](#)

- [Gleeth Yurnix](#)St. God

12/21/09 9:04am

oh man, that Abe Lincoln episode is soooooo ridiculous

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#) Soylent Green  
3/05/14 9:29pm

Wesley Crusher was a precocious, annoying little twerp.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JammerJim](#) Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 1:32pm

Muldaur in TNG

I disliked the Pulaski character as much as anyone (at least a bit... well, maybe a LOT — because Crusher was a babe) with the way she bashed on Data, but re-watching a few episodes showed the character was far from all bad. I remember her bonding with Worf, for example, and that was a cool scene.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#) JammerJim  
12/18/09 1:54pm

So, I was like 12 or so when TNG came out, and probably 14-15 when Muldaur was on and the one thing that I distinctly remember was how odd it was that they had this really, really old woman come on to replace the hot redheaded mom.

In retrospect, Crusher probably wasn't so hot and Pulaski wasn't so old, but my early-teen self couldn't take the transition.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#) JammerJim  
12/18/09 2:07pm

Crusher got hotter as the seasons and movies went on. I call it the Reverse Muldaur Effect.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#) JammerJim  
12/18/09 2:07pm

Evidently she was 30 at the time of this episode, and therefore in her late forties by the time she was on TNG. Late forties isn't obscenely old, necessarily.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#) JammerJim  
12/18/09 3:43pm

I liked Pulaski just fine. She introduced Worf to the wonders of prune juice.

Maybe she would've been much better received if she'd been given a role that didn't seem like it was usurping an established character. I mean, there's got to be more official roles than Captain, Commander, Security Chief, Engineer, and Doctor, right? Maybe she could've been a crusty science officer?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#) JammerJim  
12/18/09 4:26pm

D.M. was in an anti-drug filmstrip we watched in Grade 7 health class. It had been made no later than the early 70s and she played the mother of the troubled teen. I yelled out and pointed at the screen, but no one was impressed. Also, that film was hilariously bad, and I believe it aged her terribly.

Now, if only TNG had run with Geordi's Latina underling. She seemed primed to take over the "hot girl" spot vacated by Denise Crosby. Then they Poochie'd her away.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)JammerJim  
12/18/09 4:40pm

Supposedly, the actress playing "Ensign Gomez" was encouraging people to write in saying how much they wanted the character to remain and the Powers didn't like that and canned her. Too bad, she was indeed pretty cute.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)JammerJim  
12/18/09 5:50pm

the "hey look, she's just like McCoy!" thing is why i found Pulaski so lame. remember how McCoy didn't like the transporter? well, wouldn't ya know it, Pulaski doesn't like it either!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JammerJim  
12/19/09 12:31am

I don't know, that episode where Beverly was tapdancing, well, she was smoking hot there.

(Joke.)

I thought Crusher was hot when I was younger. I still appreciate her.

I enjoyed Pulaski too though. I love TNG, but it was sometimes slightly bland with its characters. Pulaski was, admittedly, a sort of female analog to Dr. McCoy, but I mean, Data was Spock, Riker was probably Kirk...I thought Pulaski was a slight shot in the arm, and she was a good actress.

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)JammerJim  
12/19/09 1:16am

I loved Muldaur as Pulaski. Her acerbidity was just what TNG needed.

I think Muldaur is a better actress than McFadden (talented as McFadden is) and I think Pulaski was a better doctor than Crusher.

I would MUCH rather have Pulaski treat me than McCoy or Crusher.

I would also be fine with the EMH or Bashir.

[Reply](#)

- [Colonel ClinQ](#)JammerJim  
12/22/09 1:38pm

TNG characters started off too bland. Picard was really the only "ethnic" character, that is, one with an accent.

Trek works best with funny accents. Maybe Enterprise wouldn't have been cancelled if Mayweather had a Brooklyn accent, or if Hoshi sounded a little less "American".

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)JammerJim  
12/22/09 6:23pm

According to Memory Alpha, the Star Trek Wiki, Lycia Naff aka Ensign Gomez 'also appeared briefly in Total Recall as the three-breasted mutant on Mars.'

So now you know.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 10:22am

Spectre

The two (knock it off) things I remember best about Spectre of the Gun was the unfinished Tombstone, which I thought gave it a Twilighty-feel, like that show about the Zone, and the fact that Doc Holliday seemed really, really mean.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:14am

You can even take my bag.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:26am

Actually, I thought back to this episode a lot during my many viewings of Tombstone. Kilmer was impressive, but this guy and his little shotgun just always struck me as a stone cold killer.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:28am

This episode does seem a little bit more brutal than some Treks - I wonder if (speculating wildly here) it's because the characters are drawn from Kirk's mind, and Kirk tends to see everything as very black and white. The good guys are good, the bad guys are bad, and because Doc Holliday's is a bad guy, he's properly bad.

This episode always reminds me of The Prisoner episode Living In Harmony, not just because of the Western setting, but the way it's shot, the hyper-stylised approach to filming and a real sense of uncertainty as to what is real and what isn't (and as mentioned because the bad guys SEEM really bad this time and not just stock Klingons or whatever).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 11:32am

There's an interesting idea. Its hard to really think of the Klingons or Romulans as other than cartoon-villany. These guys were just mean, mean dudes.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet  
12/18/09 5:46pm

I use the line all the time myself. And for some reason I'll also say "four fifty nine thirty" when I can as well.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 11:11pm

Spectre Of The Gun/ Is There In Truth No Beauty

I also didn't like "Is There In Truth No Beauty?" although I \*did\* like Dr. Pulaski from TNG. Glad to know that Zack and so many others like "Spectre Of The Gun." As I wrote back in the Summer of 2008, before my life (and quite possibly almost everyone else's lives) turned awful:

Excellent supporting cast, and—once we get over the substantial investment of suspension-of-disbelief required by this episode's goofy premise—darned entertaining. The sight of explosive "squibs" tearing apart the fence behind the landing party as phantom bullets fail to harm them is a memorable example of a special non-effect: it cost virtually nothing, but runs so counter to TV viewers' expectations that it's extremely effective. Still, the notion that Melkotians would prefer to harm our explorers by means of Old West simulacra rather than, maybe, daggers or dynamite (or two-by-fours with ugly jutting nails) lacks credibility.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV  
12/19/09 12:38am

I agree, and it is an interesting thing that these God-like aliens do by placing our heroes in the Old West, or fighting alongside Space Lincoln against Genghis Kahn (that episode is so batshit it's awesome), or making Kirk fight some lizard, or having some fake puppet threaten to destroy the Enterprise...one thing that always struck me is that these godlike beings liked to play Roman Empire-esque games with our people. I wish that kind of thing - the motivations - had been explored in more detail. I guess it was done for the ease of plot. Also funny how they always pass the tests. TNG did it with Q and made his motives a bit more clear.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV  
12/19/09 1:52am

Yeah, Q was so entertaining that he could even make \*VOYAGER\* entertaining. As for "Savage Curtain" (the insane episode with Space Lincoln), it's got a great line: HELP ME, SPOCK! However, in the episode "Arena" where Kirk fights the Gorn, the motives of the godlike beings were more reasonable (on a scale running, I'll admit, from totally incomprehensible to sort of comprehensible). See, the Metrons (the godlike beings) had forgotten the recipe for gunpowder, and they knew all along that Kirk had it. ("It" meaning the recipe.) :-)

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV  
12/19/09 10:32am

Loved the Voyager episode where the Q Continuum was depicted as Baghdad Cafe. "I've even been the scarecrow/We've all been the scarecrow. "

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 11:51am

Titles

The old Treks had cool, epic sounding titles that the new series' rarely aspired to.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)CFAmick  
12/18/09 11:56am

Really? Up The Long Ladder doesn't inspire fear, wonder and joy?

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)CFAmick  
12/18/09 12:27pm

"The One With Phoebe's Husband"

[Reply](#)

- [Jagoff Sumbitch of the Ozark SCF](#)Amick  
12/18/09 1:16pm

No, but it inspired giggling fits in my wife.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoHCF](#)Amick  
12/20/09 3:00am

I thought it was a reference to the saying "up the long ladder, down the short rope?" I remember reading that in an episode guide once.

Though I do like your metaphor, regardless of whether or not the writers intended it...

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 8:17pm

Spock's IDIC medallion

"Spock's IDIC medallion, a blatant attempt by Gene Roddenberry to move some merchandise, is just embarrassing. "

You do realize that the IDIC is incorporated in Spock's ship in the new movie, right?

<http://memory-alpha.org/en/...>

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Meander  
12/19/09 12:33am

Yes. And the new Star Trek movie also had some rather glaring product placement.

I heard that the shoehorned IDIC thing was originally a merchandise ploy. But who the hell was going to buy an IDIC medallion? Where were they going to sell them, in that time's equivalent of Target/Wal-Mart?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Meander  
12/19/09 2:44pm

Pretty sure the Shat went into this in some detail in his book "Star Trek Memories" As I recall, it was pretty much the Nadir of Trek, in that the whole script was written and Roddenberry walks onto set with one of these pendants and says, "Leonard you have to wear this and we'll have a little scene about it so I can sell them."

[Reply](#)

- [Colonel ClinQ](#)Meander  
12/22/09 1:41pm

If there is no Guinness in the 23rd Century than humanity deserves to die.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 12:23pm

" hey, sometimes you just lose"

James Tiberius Kirk does not believe in the no-win scenario, motherfucker.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)magnus  
12/18/09 12:37pm

Not enough work to do, bro. Everyone has physically or mentally checked out.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)magnus  
12/18/09 1:26pm

"Recommendation?"

"Prayer, Lt. Saavik. Klingons don't take prisoners."

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#)magnus  
12/20/09 3:05am

-May I ask how you beat the test, sir?

—You may ask...that's a little joke.

-Humor; it is a difficult concept. It is not logical.

—We learn by doing.

[Reply](#)

- [Colonel ClinQ](#)magnus  
12/22/09 1:32pm

he cheated

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Zack Handlen  
12/22/09 5:14pm

Final sequence of "Is There in Truth No Beauty"...!

Note carefully that Spock uses his visor when operating the transporter controls just after the final lines of dialogue among him, Kirk, and Dr. Jones. After the beam-out, the last shot is a reaction shot of Kirk, who is looking at the transporter platform - WITHOUT wearing a visor - then turns and walks through the doorway into the corridor. Hence the entire remainder of his captaincy is as an insane man. See for yourself. There is no other direction he could have been looking.

CBS.com I love this episode mainly because of George Duning's music, which seems to have gone unmentioned here. He wrote this and the score for "The Empath" at the same time (they were filmed in sequence), and there is one element common to both: a 10-note motif beginning with a downward arpeggio, a 4th followed by an augmented 4th (E-B-F), heard among other places in the final scene here (at 49:28 in the version), just before the restatement of the main theme (starting E-G-G#-G). In 1980 I wrote a fan letter to George and he was nice enough to reply - he included an informal but thorough CV that explained his facility with altered intervals (arranger for Kay Keyser's band, etc.).

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)gottacook2  
1/19/10 2:46pm

That 10-note motif is a syrupy re-arrangement for strings of a Spock motif from Gerald Fried's score for Amok Time.

cbs.com You first hear it in woodwinds (I think), in a cue called "Prying", before it dives into the bass for some variations. Then it reappears in guitar to start the cue called "Mr Spock". On you can hear it in Amok Time at 1:35, right after Spock has thrown Nurse Chapel out of his quarters, before they



break for commercial. Then again at 4:07, Kirk and Spock are talking in Spock's quarters, it's right Spock shouts "No, I must - !"

Of course it's all over the episode in variations.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)gottacook2

1/25/10 4:18pm

By the way, suites from these scores are available on CD:

<http://www.amazon.com/Symph...>

There's also a decent re-arrangement of the score into a concert piece:

[http://www.amazon.com/Star...](http://www.amazon.com/Star-...)

...with Gerald Fried's Paradise Syndrome score as its B-side. I have that 2nd CD, it's pretty good.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

12/18/09 10:50am

Hey Zack!

The guys and I have been talking and we're disappointed that moderating the Star Trek blog did not constitute your Best Personal Pop Culture Experience of the '00s. Some book thing? For shame.

[shakes head, mutters disapprovingly]

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet

12/18/09 11:52am

Hey, John Barleycorn is right! Way to snub us, Hack Zandlen!

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)john barleycorn must diet

12/18/09 1:18pm

Handlen, you just have to believe the commentators aren't real and they won't have any more affect on you AND Chekov comes back to life.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen

12/18/09 3:50pm

How to bring Spectre up to an A-

I'll agree that "Spectre of the Gun" is easily one of the best episodes of S3, despite the fact that there is no way it should have worked. But for once the, er "sparse" on-planet soundstage sets worked in their advantage.

But I think that the next time the Star Trek people rework these episodes for reissue (which should be in a week or so), instead of upgrading the special effects, they should have everybody call each other "cocksuckers!"

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)barefoot jim

12/18/09 4:12pm

I'd love to see a YouTube dubbing of that!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim

12/18/09 4:15pm

Maybe they could CGI Omar in. As a redshirt.

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 12:12pm

Anyone else seeing ads for a rip-off Star Trek game?  
Called "Space Trek!"

Or is it just me?

<http://game.uk.stne.net/>

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Penis Van Lesbian  
12/19/09 2:29am

Now I've got 'Dating for Star Trek Fans'

<http://www.gk2gk.com/>

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Penis Van Lesbian  
12/22/09 12:40pm

Please, please, please let them make a reference to that site on The Big Bang Theory.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 8:23pm

Jones' jealousy

"Then Spock gets his own glimpse of the creature, goes a little mad, and Jones has to bring him back, despite being terribly jealous that he seems closer to Kollos than she can ever be."

It was probably her jealousy that caused him to slip and forget the visor.

Also, I thought that Muldaur was excellent as Pulaski.

~

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Meander  
12/19/09 12:34am

I agree, she was good as Pulaski. Good actress, and played the crusty curmudgeon well. TNG needed a character like that at that time, I think.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 1:30pm

Diana Muldaur was way hot in season 2's "Return To Tomorrow"  
Why no love?

I always thought her character here was analogous to a hot, unobtainable nun, with Kollos being the object of her divine worship. Looking at the face of the Big G would make you crazy, no?

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)The Pizza Monster  
12/18/09 2:36pm

Or angels! Looking at an angel can drive you insane! According to "The X-Files", at least.

Or a Seraphim, whatever that is [episode 5X17: All Souls]

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 12:22pm

'Kollo's supposed "ugliness" '

You see you, as a human with a human face, think that a man with a pig face is "ugly". On a planet of pig-faced people, a pig face is beautiful and YOU are ugly. Wacky, huh? It's all in the eye of the something or other.

[Reply](#)

- [Curtis E. Bear](#)magnus  
12/18/09 1:08pm

We were supposed to think the pig faces were ugly? Man I REALLY missed the point of that episode.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 5:58pm

the thing about Beauty

i never understood how, if the Medusans had basically evolved into bright flashing lights that drove people insane, they could have an ambassador, or technological advancements useful to the Federation. wouldn't it make relations with other races prohibitively difficult?

i agree that Spectre is good though. i always loved the scene where Earp and the gang are marching to the corral with dead looks on their faces. creepy.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)tibber  
12/18/09 8:23pm

In the show they were great navigators.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen  
12/18/09 11:09am

Medusans? Really?

"Whoa, nice face. Where are you from, planet Medusa? HA!"

"Yes, yes I am."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Chico McDirk  
12/18/09 11:28am

I'm sure you can find your way out.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen  
6/19/14 3:34pm

"With the exception of "Spock's Brain," I'm of the opinion that everything we've seen so far had at least some potential in the opening scenes"

Not sure whether it says, 'gee, they had a lot of potentially good scripts', or 'gee, they blew a lot of potentially good scripts', but even Spock's Brain was promising. The idea of a kidnapped crew member and what Enterprise should risk to retrieve that crew member; the idea of a schism between men and women within a society and what form that would take and the consequences resulting; etc.

Have aliens kidnap Spock entire, get rid of yet one more set of dreadful Theiss costumes, make the search for the planet Spock is on more exemplary of the crew's teamwork at its best; make the males living on the planet surface less comically apish and their society more interesting, change the dialogue of the female lead to something less unintentionally hilarious, get rid of the absurd ending where someone recovering from massive brain surgery sits up and immediately begins chatting, and you just might have an average episode!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

12/19/09 10:30pm

Beauty/Spectre

I've always enjoyed "Is There In Truth No Beauty"; it's ambitious in its themes, at least, in a way a lot of Trek aspired to and didn't really achieve. Everybody's hands-i-ness on Diana Muldaur gets kind of old, though, and something tells me an insane engineer is \*less\* likely to be capable of incredible feats of technical prowess. But leaving aside the nits to pick, it's one of Trek's more thoughtful episodes.

"Spectre of the Gun" on the other hand is mostly another ride 'round the mountain of shop-worn Trek plotting. Until Deadwood came out and reimagined the genre, I actively loathed Westerns, and I don't have much more patience with them when you throw the Enterprise crew into one. I agree with Zack that the ticking clock does throw a nice chill on the proceedings, but this one's definitely in the bottom half of Trek episodes for me.

[Reply](#)

- [eh](#)Zack Handlen

12/21/09 1:05am

Diana Muldaur

She always does seem to play smart but grating characters that audiences love to hate. If I recall correctly, in LA Law they killed off her character by having her accidentally step into an empty elevator shaft.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Zack Handlen

12/22/09 1:04pm

Backwards

Having seen Red Dwarf long before I ever saw TOS, "Spectre of the Gun" always reminds me of "Gunmen of the Apocalypse." Especially with both episodes taking place inside one character's mind, more or less.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen

12/18/09 12:19pm

'...each man in turn blames her for her supposed "coldness"  
She was saving herself for McCloud.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen

12/18/09 1:25pm

"Spectre" of the Gun?

I knew Roddenberry was British!

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Day Of The Dove"/"For The World Is Hollow And I Have Touched The Sky"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 8, 2010

[Comments \(131\)](#)



Today on *Star Trek*, we're going to learn a very special lesson about friendship, and love, and not doing that whole thing where you cut somebody up with a sword. Yeah, that's bad. Partly because it leads to death, destruction, and a general unwillingness to make eye contact, but also because there are these blobs of light that hang around and totally get off on the bad vibes. To the point where they like to step in and manipulate people to make sure those bad vibes keep happening. Which makes the special lesson slightly less applicable, because if some murderous prism (hey, finally!) is pushing you to the dark side, that's not really a situation that the general audience can relate to. Still, hugs instead of, um, less friendly things. Amiright?

I've been trying to figure out just what it is about the third season that sucks so hard—the costumes are terrible, and the acting is hammier than before, but what's really suffering to my mind is the pace. I'm a big proponent of pacing, in television shows and hospital waiting rooms, and I don't think it's all that ridiculous to say that the pacing of a series is one of the most important elements in its artistic and commercial success. You watch a well-oiled warhorse like *Law & Order*, and you expect a certain rhythm to its structure, each scene hitting enough beats to give us a sense of place and character and provide us with whatever key information the scene was written for, before moving on. More adventurous shows are less predictable, but there's still an awareness of how the audience's attention has to be earned and manipulated at the same time; they have to see enough to justify their attention, but you have to know what to tease with and what to drag out to make sure that attention lasts the duration.

So far, the third season has been really rough from this perspective. There is a lot of padding—note the weirdly long elevator rides in "Day of the Dove." Every time a character does an action that isn't necessary or exciting for us to watch, it doesn't really belong on the screen. Obviously you don't want to cut too much out, but too many scenes of characters walking someplace after finishing a conversation, too many reaction shots when there's nothing new to react to, and the flow of the story starts to stutter. Even worse is the curiously straightforward nature of "Dove," and "For The World Is Hollow And I Have Touched The Sky." The openings of both have solid mysteries, but those mysteries are solved by the halfway point, after which there really isn't much in the way of twists or even effective suspense. Arguably this is more a scripting issue than a pacing one, but it still affects the episode's rhythm, because it means we're

watching and receiving information that we expect to see. Basically, these are stories missing the third heat, that extra impact that makes the final act more like a gift than a payment.

"Dove" gives us another dead colony of Federation folks. At least, I assume they're dead; Kirk and the team beam down after a distress message, and nobody's around. The first assumption I made was that the light being (that never communicates with anyone, and is never actually given a name) destroyed them, or caused them to destroy each other, but that doesn't make any sense. We learn as the story develops that the creature has the ability to heal seemingly fatal wounds, and is invested in keeping people alive so they'll go on hating each other and giving it food. So why let the colonists die out? Either there was some kind of mass death that was too much for Shiny the Hate Sucker to process, or else the whole concept of a colony (made up of, as Kirk informs, a hundred men, women, and children) was a concept put into the minds of our heroes to get them to come to the planet. The latter makes more sense, but how powerful would a creature have to be to send out, what, mind waves to a space-ship light years distant?

Then the Klingons arrive, and the situation becomes more complicated. The Klingon ship has been severely damaged by an attack—one that the Klingon captain, Kang, blames on the *Enterprise*. It's never really confirmed, but I think we're supposed to believe that Shiny managed to waste Kang's ship, in order to force it to the planet, even though that doesn't really make sense, and then create an immediate enmity between the Klingons and the folks from Starfleet. Only, the ship was approaching the planet, which means that if Shiny did the (massive) damage, it would have to be powerful enough to attack from very far away. In which case, why the ruse with the planet at all? Was it necessary to get the groups together? Not sure.

So once again we've got a godlike being, and once again, that being's powers are ill-defined. Kirk ends up beaming the entire crew of Kang's ship onto the *Enterprise* to save their lives, which makes for a tense situation, as both sides despise each other. Kang believes Kirk destroyed his ship, Kirk blames Kang for the destruction of the colony, and Chekov has this obsession with revenging his dead brother. I'll give "Dove" points for that last development, as I was suckered in to believe it the sort of traditional, left-field character development that TV shows often engage in to provide secondary characters with more connection to the main plot. So it surprised me when a stunned Sulu tells Kirk that Chekov is an only child. Clearly, Shiny's been playing some head games to make his hate harvesting easier.

It's too bad, then, that Chekov's quest for vengeance leads to the episode's most profoundly ill-judged sequence. Chekov ends up wandering the lower decks of the ship with a sword (there's a power outage at one point, but we don't see him stalking through the dark, which counts as missed opportunity in my book), and finally encounters Mara, Kang's wife and science officer. Chekov makes quick work of her guard, moves to kill Mara as well, but then has second thoughts. Because she's pretty, and all. It's only the arrival of Kirk and the others that keeps Chekov from raping the Klingon—and that's just dumb. Shiny increases prejudice, pushes loathing and fear to the surface, but it needs pre-existing emotions, however faint, to be there in order to work. (This isn't explicitly stated, but if the creature is able to create rage out of whole cloth, what little thematic meaning "Dove" has disappears entirely.) So now we're to assume, for the rest of the run of the show, that Chekov, under the right circumstances, would rape someone? Or, even worse, are we to assume that this is just a base level for all men, that with just a little push, we all would commit atrocities?

I don't really buy it. And it may be the modern perspective talking, but the episode can't really support this level of darkness, at least not from a regular character who, apart from the awful Russia jokes, has never been mean or cruel. While the conflict in "Dove" generally stays above this level, and while it had the potential to exploit the pre-existing tensions between Klingon and human, this is all very surface level and toothless. It's more like a Captain Planet episode, one where all the kids get doused with some pollution that makes them even jerkier than usual. Having Shiny non-communicative also kills one of the great pleasures of the godlike being episodes; there's no one to gloat, or spout faux-Shakespearean dialog, or refer to Kirk as "puny" or "insignificant." I appreciate that once again *Trek* makes the effort to give both sides of the conflict a fair shake, as Kang is a decent guy, and in the end he and Kirk team up to laugh Shiny out of the ship. But the moral here was too on the nose, too simplistic to work, and there wasn't enough sugar to make the medicine go down smooth.

At least there was some urgency to the proceedings, though. "For The World Is Hollow, And I Have Touched the Sky" has an awesome title, a cool looking asteroid ship, aaaaaand a year's worth of time before any of this matters. It's another ep with a primitive civilization kept in thrall by a false machine god, and it's got an ark plot as well, the science fiction trope of a ship sent out by a dying civilization to find a new home so the entire culture won't die out. Of course,

what culture we see on the asteroid of Yonada isn't all that impressive—hideous, thrift store outfits, and an arcane religion dedicated to keeping everyone from asking questions because if they did ask questions, Kirk wouldn't have anything to do. There's also a high priestess, Natira, who's hard enough up for love (or else deeply committed enough to her daddy issues) to put the moves on McCoy. No offense to DeForest Kelley, an actor as important to the show in his way as Shatner or Nimoy, but, well, he's not a young forty-eight. Natira's attraction might be more believable if it isn't so heavily pushed as an at-first-sight deal. As it stands now, their initial tender moment looks like McCoy having a minor stroke.

I suppose that would make sense—McCoy is, after all, not a well man. Early in the episode, Bones explains that he's got xenopolycythemia (thank god for subtitles), a rare blood disorder that will kill him in a year. So, no rush or anything. I don't mind if the leads have their lives threatened every now and again; just because we know they'll get off in the end, safe suspense can be fun. This is flat out ridiculous, though. The disease has no relation to anything else that happens in the episode, meaning that McCoy discovers he has a rare fatal illness less than a day before the *Enterprise* stumbles across an ancient alien civilization which, despite being completely buffaloed by phasers, has the medical expertise necessary to cure what ails him. That's bad, bad writing right there. I mean, did anybody think the ep would end with him still sick? Was anybody, even when this first aired, surprised that the Yonadans were the answer?

It makes a kind of sense, though, if you view it from a character perspective. Once McCoy, Kirk, and Spock find their way into the asteroid (which has plenty of life forms on it, despite the instruments reading none at all; I'm beginning to think Spock just makes everything up to satisfy some weird Vulcan sense of humor), Kirk and Spock quickly realize that Natira is into McCoy, and urge him to distract her while they try and figure out what the heck is going on. McCoy is instantly smitten with Natira, and when she proposes marriage, he agrees, sending Kirk and Spock (who now understand the whole computer situation, but are powerless to do anything about it) back to the *Enterprise* while he stays behind.

Admittedly, it's the second or third conversation before McCoy goes full groom, and since he passes information back to Kirk and Spock later in the episode, he hasn't completely given up on his old friends. But I think his desire to stay with the young hottie who is inexplicably obsessed with him is sincere, and looking past the more prurient reasons, I think his illness is an acceptable motivation. Faced with his own mortality, with no real family to call his own, who wouldn't jump at a chance to go out like a king, shacking up with somebody who's devoted to you and riding an asteroid through the stars? It's a clumsy device, and it doesn't really work, because it's not given any time to work; we find out McCoy is sick in the second scene, and despite all of Kirk and Nurse Chapel's concern (in typical Nurse Chapel fashion, we see her freaking out at the doctor for not telling anyone), the threat of death is never dramatically sound. But it's easy to understand why it was used.

"Hollow" also suffers from a major deficit in urgency. In "Dove," once Kirk and Spock realized the danger, they also knew that if they didn't act quickly, the light being would become so powerful that not even an army of Care Bears could stop it. With "Hollow," on the other hand, we have two deadlines—the asteroid arriving at an inhabited planet, and McCoy's illness. McCoy's got a year; Yonada won't actually get anywhere for 396 days. So, um, who cares? That's more than enough time for a whole army of Federation ships to arrive, and plenty of time for Kirk to talk McCoy out of the wedding. We do get Starfleet command telling Kirk that he's off the assignment, but c'mon, when has that ever been an issue? The computer that runs Yonada is nasty, to be sure, but it never feels all that powerful, even when it kills an old man for saying the episode's title out loud.

This could've been alleviated by interesting characters, or a cool design aesthetic, but once you get past the concept of a world inside an asteroid, there's not much to see. And again, we have Kirk and Spock unraveling the mystery by the halfway mark, and then spending the rest of the episode on clean-up duty. You know McCoy is coming back, you know he'll be cured, and you know that the computer will be defeated. About the only question is whether or not Natira will make it to the end credits, and happily, she does—which means McCoy, unlike Kirk, isn't a widower. Then again, that also means we get a lousy joke at the end about McCoy getting to visit Natira again sometime for a booty call.

Both these episodes had potential in them—the conflict between the Klingons and the humans, a civilization trapped inside a giant ball—but both are hampered by scripts that fail to act on that potential in any satisfying way. Neither is completely terrible, and both are watchable in a "Well, why not" kind of way. But man, I wish somebody would've tried a little harder.

## Grades:

"Day of the Dove": B-

"For The World Is Hollow And I Have Touched The Sky": B-

## Stray Observations:

- When Kang explains, "This is my wife, Mara, and my science officer," we get an immediate cut to Kirk and Spock. So I guess that would make slash fiction writers happy.
- Scotty is delighted to find a Claymore in the new armory Shiny works up. A quick Google check confirms suspicions that what he's holding is not, in fact, a Claymore.
- McCoy gets married, has the "Instrument of Obedience" implanted in his skull, and then acts surprised when it zaps him for reporting to Kirk. So I guess his blood disorder also makes him forget cause and effect?
- When Kirk and Spock try and go for the computer's operating manual, the machine drastically raises the temperature in the room. I'm not sure this is an effective device, since it seems like it would damage the machine just as much as the people.
- Next week, "The Tholian Web" and "Plato's Stepchildren"

## DISCUSSION

- Community (131)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [haysoos](#)Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 10:29am

Claymore/Sabre whatever

Even when I was nine, Scotty picking up a basket-hilt sabre and calling it a claymore bothered me.

Apparently I came upon my pedantry early.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 11:06am

Scottish, Heysoos, or just into blades?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 11:18am

What's a pedant, Walter?

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 11:27am

Somewhere around 1/4 Scottish, but mostly the blade thing.

[Reply](#)

- [SoCal Distortion](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 12:59pm

You want pedantry? The classic basket hilt shown in the episode was technically a broadsword, not a sabre. Also, while the term "claymore" specifically refers to the two-handed Scottish sword that pretty much died out in the 17th Century, the subsequent basket hilts were commonly referred to as claymores in contemporary accounts. So Scotty really wasn't wrong.



What can I say? Scottish on both sides, and a collector of antique edged weapons.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:06pm

Did you know that, before detonating a claymore, you are supposed to shout "Claymore, claymore, claymore!"

Almost 10 years later, and I can't clear the Army basic training clutter out of my head.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:09pm

Well, what do you know? My nine-year-old self just got schooled.

Can I get some kind of receipt for the misplaced annoyance I've had at the claymore reference for the last thirty years?

[Reply](#)

- [SoCal Distortion](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:16pm

No, it actually bothered me for too, until I started getting into collecting (I have 3 basket hilts from the 18th/19th C.) and research. Consider me schooled as well.

[Reply](#)

- [SoCal Distortion](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:17pm

"for years" - need more coffee.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:18pm

Exactly, Mubble. Two completely different styles of sword, but called the same thing.

I played D&D and was really into swords. So the chicks, you know, really dug me.

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:51pm

Set me straight here, Mr. Distortion. (This is a real question, not an affront to your knowledge.) I thought "broadsword" was a catch-all term for European style, double-edged swords built for stabbing armored opponents in the armpits. And that the term "broadsword," like "dai-katana," didn't exist when swords were actually used as weapons and is spoken exclusively by fantasy nerds. What kind of broadsword looks like a basket-hilted saber?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:55pm

I thought the word "broadsword" was used to describe a military sword, as opposed to the rapier worn by civilians.

I could be wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 1:59pm

The most annoying thing about the claymore bit — it's been cut in the version of the show airing in syndication with the new sfx. So I keep waiting to see it and being disappointed. :/

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 2:52pm

Hey DCRJ, I got a question for you: Do Claymore mines have instructions that say 'this side towards enemy', or is Call of Duty just messing with me?

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 2:53pm

Just remember, if you're not sure, then the claymore is always pointed at YOU.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 2:59pm

Um, yes they do, George Liquor. Yes they do. Because apparently we don't trust that our soldiers are capable of aiming explosive devices correctly.

It's kind of sad, really, but you just know somewhere in history some poor private detonated his claymore at himself.

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 3:02pm

And do they beep/flash red three times before they go off?

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 3:13pm

Well, the indicator light on the trigger is supposed to blink three times, I think, but those damn things never worked.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 4:12pm

I don't know if they still do (the Canadian ones certainly don't), but Vietnam-era Claymore mines also had a big "DO NOT EAT" on the opposite side of the "FRONT: TOWARDS ENEMY".

That always struck me as hilariously funny. Any time I have to make a label for something (light bulbs, staplers, pheromone lures, insecticide) I always include "DO NOT EAT" in the label.

[Reply](#)

- [SoCal Distortion](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 5:00pm

@Bakken Hood: The terminology can get a little convoluted. The term "broadsword" is associated with pre-15thC straight bladed, double edged swords, but the term applies to any such sword regardless of the era. A broadsword is any straight double edge sword used primarily for

cutting/thrusting. What most people think of (I assume) as a broadsword - knights in armor etc. - is usually a longsword. A sabre can also be a broadsword, as a number of troops (like 19thC British heavy cavalry) used long, straight bladed swords from horseback . Usually, though, sabres are a separate animal, with one edge instead of two.

Then you have hand and a half swords, backswords, falchions, rapiers, schiavonas, blah blah.

Christ I 'm a dork.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 5:04pm

I thought a broadsword was just used for stabbing women.

[Reply](#)

- [Bakken Hood](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 5:22pm

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki...>

Wikipedia! Making know-it-alls out of smug, clueless nerds since 2001.

[Reply](#)

- [Codename Workerbee](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 5:35pm

Coach McGuirk: Hey, My Swords are worth more than all these foods combined.

Clerk: Yes, But we do not accept swords.

Coach McGuirk: Why don't you accept swords?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 6:36pm

@AJAX:

Hey, I didn't know they'd actually recut the 'new' redone Treks.. Why did they do that?

Is there a list somewhere of the changes they made?

When he wrote aboutt hat scene, I saw it in my mind like I'd only seent he episode yesterday, whereas it's been at least 20 years...

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 9:25pm

The subtitles are wrong. The weapon Scotty holds is a Q'lehMohr ("bringer of unpleasantness").

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)haysoos  
1/08/10 9:29pm

Oh good lord - Shiny-the-Hate-Sucker (and thank you so much for that) just turned Chekov into a Klingon-rapist avenging a bother he never had.

I'm SURE that under its influence, Scotty the uber-Scot would call the first sufficiently large sword a Claymore, not matter what it really was.

~

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)haysoos

1/08/10 10:50pm

@Rich: My guess is that it was generally for the same reason they do anything with syndicated TV shows: to squeeze in more commercials. Ten seconds here, ten seconds there, and hey presto, you're making more money.

I haven't found a master list of all the changes, but several of the eps I have seen include brand new "exterior shots" of the ship, shuttlecraft, etc to show off the CGI effects they added. And you've gotta make room for new footage by cutting the old, because the running time will never be revised upward in syndication for the reason mentioned above.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)haysoos

1/09/10 1:07am

@AJAX; I've got the DVDs (both old and new.. I know...) so I'll check if it's on the DVD or not. It's funny, they have a little 'making of' thing on the DVD that goes on about how the new CGI is meant to be unobtrusive and how they made it last the same as the old shots.. Maybe they were lying to us? After all, the 'new' Empire Strikes Back' is actually shorter than the 'real' one...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 12:44pm

Shatner rap

My favorite part of "Day of the Dove" as a child was Shatner's little rhyme at the end with the Klingons. I always found it kind of hilarious and a bit awkward. Why does he decide to bust into rhyme? I had it memorized when I was little and once when I was a teenager put it to a cheesy hip-hop beat. Yes, I was weird.

The episode also had some quotes that I thought were interesting as a kid. I never forgot lines like "A thousand throats may be cut in one night by a running man." That's the stuff I remember from my youth about this episode. And also the beginning with the "Go to the devil" line. Stuff like that.

Here's another weird thing about me; when I was 5 or 6 I would take a little tape recorder that I had and put the microphone by the TV and record the audio from these old Star Trek episodes. Sometimes I'd listen to it at night in my bedroom (I wasn't allowed to have TV in my room as a child). I was quite young but I liked listening to it. "Day of the Dove" was one that I recorded so I always distinctly remembered the lines, even to this day. I can still recite Shatner's rhymes.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)St. God

1/08/10 12:51pm

I did like the "thousand throats" line. It seemed very Klingon-esque.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)St. God

1/08/10 1:34pm

I didn't tape record anything, but I did write a little synopsis of each episode that I called "The Star Trek Diaries" that I kept under my bed. To this day, my sister uses this to mock me in front of people.

The point, as always, is that I was a weird little dweeb, and that my sister is evil.

I'm kidding. I wasn't that weird.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
1/08/10 1:51pm

Yeah, that's a good line. I really think that I learned some of my vocabulary from Star Trek, specifically from listening to it. There are a few lines in "Dove" that I've always enjoyed.

Has anyone seen the movie "Free Enterprise"? The Shatner rap at the end of "Dove" came to mind when I was watching the "No Tears for Caesar" scene in FE.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)St. God  
1/08/10 2:05pm

Kang's slightly-too-rough-to-really-be-jocular backslap of Kirk in that scene is another great Klingon moment.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)St. God  
1/08/10 5:14pm

It turns out hip-hop is the preferred style of music for all Klingons.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
1/08/10 6:55pm

At DCRJ.. Was your sis making fun of your Terk fandom or the way you spelled 'diaries'? ;-)

That 'running man' line has stuck with me as well, and I've since seen it in a few other things.. I'm thinking Lawrence of Arabia, maybe? I remember thinking: That's a Klingon saying!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
1/08/10 10:37pm

DCRJ, did you really write "Star Trek Diaries"? That's fucking hot. I mean, now it is, you being an adult now. Uh, I'm just going to stop there.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)St. God  
1/08/10 10:56pm

The fleshing out of the Klingons is the main reason I love this episode. Anyone notice how, at the beginning, they have a different-looking transporter effect? More red and strobe? That's pretty good attention to detail, I thought. Also loved all the Klingon sayings:

"1000 throats, etc."

"Only a fool fights in a burning house."

"We have no devil, Kirk, but we understand the habits of yours."

That shit is gold... it gave the Klingons more personality than the "GRRR" they're left with now. Also, at some point Mara explains that the Klingons are impoverished, if they don't keep expanding they'll die, and they're too proud to beg.

Does this jive with the behavior we saw in "Errand of Mercy"? Not entirely, but it's not entirely inconsistent either. People can be pretty ruthless when backed into a corner. Also, note that Mara has been indoctrinated to view the Federation as they view the Klingons. And... a married couple running

a ship? That seems outside the paradigm as well, and coupled with her being the science officer it makes them seem perhaps more liberal than the Federation.

The Klingons have never been more interesting than in Day of the Dove. It would have been cool to have a season 4 in which we saw more of the Klingons in this mode, and we could identify or sympathize with them a bit more. A+ original Star Trek episode. I think a lot of the complaints in the review are reaches and technicalities, and represent not letting the episode stand on its own merits outside of its obvious season 3-ness.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
1/08/10 11:15pm

As I said above, I loved the lines in this episode. The "burning house" line is great too.

Also contains maybe my favorite Captain's Log: "Captain's Log...Armageddon!"

I don't propose to spend the rest of my life on this ball of dust arguing your fantasies!

I also agree that this episode did much to further the Klingons. I think actually this episode had some definitive things. The fact that it is stated that the Klingons "maintain their dueling tradition" or however it is stated must have paved the way for this in the TNG era where the dueling thing was a huge part of their identity. That became pretty iconic with regard to Klingons. Also the more eloquent yet barbaric thing, and they aren't just simply brutes (or caricatures as in Tribbles, where the guy was kind of silly - or, off topic, they were able to easily hide that they were Klingons by...fucking shaving! The 5 o'clock shadow is a dead giveaway!).

"Then transfer out - freak!"

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
1/09/10 8:30pm

All the interesting things about Klingons from this episode were expanded in John M Ford's awesome 1984 Star Trek novel The Final Reflection. If you haven't read it, get it and read it. I think used copies are available from Amazon for like a cent. The different transporter effect, the expand-or-die thing, the business with the science officer also being the consort — geez, everything cool.

Klingons in TNG were so lame and stupid compared to Ford's version, it still pisses me off 20+ years later.

[Reply](#)

- [Ruddy Ruddy](#)St. God  
1/10/10 12:32pm

"Out! We need no urging to hate humans, but for the present, only a fool fights in a burning house. Out!" stands out as a particularly cool line when preceded by Kirk's "So ... ship out! C'mon, haul it!" and McCoy's "Yeah, out, already!" I always half-expect McCoy to add "Go on — scram!" and huck a rock at the alien entity.

[Reply](#)

- [Ruddy Ruddy](#)St. God  
1/10/10 12:34pm

Also, I've always wondered if that backslap was scripted, and, if so, if Ansara embellished it. The impact is so palpable that Shatner seems genuinely caught off guard and nearly knocked off his feet.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)St. God

1/10/10 3:01pm

There are many good lines because this was one of Jerome Bixby's episodes. Of all the published SF writers recruited in 1966-67 to contribute episodes, Bixby was the only one remaining for the third season - he did "Mirror, Mirror" and "By Any Other Name" in season 2, and this one and "Requiem for Methuselah" in season 3.

My favorite (as delivered by Ansara): "You are now prisoners of the Klingon Empire against which you have committed a wanton act of WAR!"

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)St. God

1/11/10 7:41am

Yes, I really did write "Star Trek Diaries" when I was a kid.

No, I cannot spell.

And although I already have a b/f, I've always wondered what it would be like to get with God.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

1/11/10 10:20pm

Requiem for Methuselah is cheesy and annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)St. God

1/12/10 3:17am

I happen to enjoy "Requiem," especially with the uncut Brahms waltz (providing several dialogue-free minutes, always a refreshing change in any series) - even if the story isn't to your taste, there are good exchanges there as well. Such as:

KIRK: Shut up, Spock - we're fighting over a woman!

SPOCK: No, you are not - for she is not.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 1:40pm

Pardon...

What does this mean:

"When Kang explains, "This is my wife, Mara, and my science officer," we get an immediate cut to Kirk and Spock. So I guess that would make slash fiction writers happy."

I'm probably being dense, but I don't understand your point here.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 1:49pm

A. Wife = science officer.

B. Spock = science officer.

Therefore, Spock = wife.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 1:56pm

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

The idea being that Spock is Kirk's wife, and his science officer.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 2:01pm

It's a legitimately humorous observation, and K/S slash is pretty infamous in fanfic circles. Personally though, I always pictured Kirk as the wife.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 2:01pm

Well, I'll be.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 2:17pm

Please. Spock was more a man than that pansy ass ever was.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 2:32pm

Kirk is once, twice, three times a lady. Using, of course, Senator Diane Feinstein as a baseline, who is exactly one time a lady.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 3:28pm

Heh, I was doing research for a historiography of Star Trek for a social/cultural history class in grad school back in '04 and discovered this stuff for the first time, and was shocked. The fanart I saw in one book was particularly astonishing. Had no idea that sort of stuff was out there.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 3:33pm

The Kirk/Spock pairing is why fanfic with homosexual character pairings is referred to as "slash" - the "/" between the character names denoted it as a romantic pairing, and now all fanfic genres generally refer to homosexual character pairings as slash or femslash (for lesbian relationships).

And I knew that without clicking the wikipedia link. And yes, I should be ashamed of knowing that.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 4:23pm

This is one of those times I wish Biastioc would chime in with an opinion.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 4:51pm

In a way, I feel like the AV Club has stolen my innocence.



[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/08/10 5:01pm

but is the slash fiction reserved for Kirk and Spock? what about McCoy and Spock? that sure was a tender moment between them in For The World...

[Reply](#)

- [Dogstyle Afternoon](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/08/10 6:06pm

Slash fiction goes all over the place, tibber—there's Kirk and Spock, McCoy and Spock, Chekhov and Sulu... it's like the damn Enterprise was just an excuse for a neverending orgy. This transcends Trek fanfiction, too: there's a shitload of fricking slash fiction featuring Sonic The Hedgehog and Tails, Sonic and Dr. Robotnik, etc. I wish I was making that up, but I'm not.

somethingawful.com<http://www.somethingawful.c...>(I only know about the Sonic stuff due to the hilarious riff about it located at :

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/08/10 6:58pm

I ran into a Wookiee fetish site which had people writing their fantasies about Chewbacca... Takes all kinds...

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/08/10 9:42pm

Oh, then you never heard that Capt Janeway was a HUGE S/M mistress, then?

"The Secret Logs of Mistress Janeway"

<http://www.squidge.org/nova...>

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/08/10 10:39pm

I first heard of "slash fiction" from a bit on some documentary or show that showed a lot of Data and Tasha Yar porn. Which in a way isn't horrible to imagine. I heard some radio thing that intercut old TOS quotes to make a sort of audio slash fiction between Kirk and Spock and they talked at some point about their slash stuff.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/09/10 12:49am

"...it's like the damn Enterprise was just an excuse for a neverending orgy."

You mean, like this?

<http://www.youtube.com/watc...>

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/10/10 12:30pm

They're already up to "The Secret Logs of Mistress Janeway #64"? Looks like I know what I'll be doing all the rest of the weekend!

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/11/10 7:46am

Well, slash fanfic these days refers to any homosexual character pairing, but in TOS lore, the Kirk/Spock pairing was the most common, which is why it is considered the origin of the "slash" moniker. I'm sure there were Kirk/McCoy and Spock/McCoy pairings as well (particularly Spock/McCoy - annoyed banter is so hot, isn't it?), but since Kirk/Spock was the most popular, it gets the dubious "honor" of being considered the progenitor of slash fanfic.

Statistically, adult females with a college degree are the primary writers/readers of this stuff, and I hit that demographic hard. Not sure I get taking to het male characters and writing about them taking it up the photon torpedo tube, though.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 11:24am

Photonovels

I had the Day of the Dove photonovel... Do you remember those things? Photos of the scenes, printed on really stiff, heavy high-gloss paper, with little cartoon 'talk bubbles' coming out of the character's mouths... I had one for Close NEounters and a few other Star Treks as well..Oh and Space 1999 I think!

One time my best friend was sleeping over (well we called it sleeping over, but I am an insomniac and a recovering sadist so I never let my friends actually get any shut-eye), nad he kep nodding off while we were reading the books.. I threw one at him and/..well, let's just say when I told you the paper was stiff and heavy, I wasn't kidding. I totally clocked him with the spine of the book,leaving a dark purple strip across his face...

So what I'm saying is, Day of the Dove sucks!

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 11:36am

I had one of those for 'Trouble with Tribbles'.

I don't recall ever injuring anyone with it, but considering how many objects I injured my little brother with over the years, it's certainly possible.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 12:16pm

I recall having the one for Star Trek III, and the accompanying record which would chime when you were supposed to turn the page. I'd have to go back to my folks house and try to dig it up to be sure, but I seem to remember (being a children's book) them skirting around minor plot points like David Marcus getting stabbed.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 12:27pm

"Klingon bastards, you killed my son!"

\*chime\*

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 12:39pm

When I visited my parents for Christmas I stayed in the guest room where all of my old crap was stored and I found my "A Piece of the Action" photonovel. I used to have "Dave of the Dove" as well. I used to love those things.

Also while there I found a few of the Blish novelizations and - best of all - an old Star Trek "Choose Your Own Adventure" book that I sat up reading. That thing was great. I miss being a kid sometimes.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:09pm

Ha ha, I had at least a couple of those Star Trek chose your own adventure books. Ah, the memories.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:18pm

Choose your own adventure FTW!

I bought one of those on amazon a few years back and found myself reading the whole damn thing in one setting. It don't get no better'n that!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:37pm

Yeah, I sat up all night reading the thing. It's so much fun to choose the wrong thing and then go back and do it over. Ah, if only life were like that.

It was a blast to read but appropriately cheesy. I think one of the deaths was being smothered with oatmeal or something. Man, now I want to seek out more of those. I also found an old Doctor Who one that wasn't nearly as fun.

I also found some old Star Trek Key Comics that I'd bought at a flea market as a child. Looking at them now, they were actually pretty damn good. And, lastly, I found my old Star Trek Power Records vinyl with four stories on it. Listened to it; hilarious stuff. The stories weren't terrible - no worse than TAS episodes I guess - but the voices were way off. (I also had a Kojak Power Records vinyl that was a blast to listen to. God damn I was a little geek.)

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:42pm

Sweet Jesus, I had that book! You got smothered in oatmeal!

Why the fuck do I remember that?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:47pm

I seem to remember one Choose Your Own Adventure where you could get wrapped up in candle wick and dipped into boiling hot wax. That was some gruesome shit when you're 6.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 3:04pm

DCRJ, I guess it is a distinctive enough way to die. There's another way to die where you get zapped, and another where this gigantic fuck lizard thing kills you. All very fun stuff. I always liked the idea that in the story you were an ensign and could interact with Kirk and Spock etc. in spots. But I always remembered the oatmeal thing the most.

I couldn't find anything online about that particular book but if anyone is interested in the Power Records stuff, here's a link where you can listen to and/or (legally) download and listen to mp3s of it. It's a bit of fun. The voices aren't horrible but off enough to make it funny. "The Time Stealer" is funny and was my favorite when I was very little. Some of this shit would make great and hilarious samples.

powerrecordsplaza.blogspot.com (scroll down to Star Trek)

[Reply](#)

- [Ukridge](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 5:29pm

If you want to wear the red shirt, turn to page 23.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 6:41pm

Count me among those having died by oatmeal...

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 9:07pm

I had a few of those Star Trek photonovels, including "Piece of the Action" and the one with the Horta monster...

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 9:55pm

Bantam Fotonovels! Yeah, I still have a few of those. I got most of them when I was in Kindergarten. The binding was shoddy and the pages fell out of most of them. They do in fact look almost exactly like comic books with photo-stills rather than art; they even retain the comic book custom of having little text-boxes here and there to "explain" things—sometimes to make sound-cues clear to readers and also to provide plain old regular commentary.

For instance, in the Fotonovel for "The Trouble With Tribbles," just after Cyrano Jones' remark "Trust me. Once the lovely lady starts to show that precious little darling around, you won't be able to keep up with them," a little box at the bottom of the page says, [[For that matter, no one will!]] Another such "purple box" from later on in the book says, [[Presumably, this is the tribble that breaks the Captain's back!]] Lotta exclamations. Yes, very comic-bookish.

Bantam started off the Fotonovel series with several popular episodes, and eventually got around to some of the lesser works from the Trek library, including "Day Of The Dove." Fotonovel #1 was COTEOF, #2 was WNMHGB.

For the normal people in the audience, those episodes are "Cabbage Objectifies Tonsillectomy: Eldritch Ocelot Framework" and "Why Not Moisturize Handlebar Grandiloquence Blench?" Star Trek was known for its puzzling episode titles, like the title of the \*other\* episode reviewed today.

BALTAR

[Reply](#)

- [Metal Gear did me a Solid](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 10:34pm

I'm a full-fledged adult who can't do my taxes, but damned if i can't find an oatmeal related star trek choose your own adventure book online.

<http://memory-beta.wikia.co...>

The first one, the voyage to adventure book.

You're welcome, world.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Kapow](#)Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 10:50am

New boss

The third season had a new studio at the controls. Lucy sold Deslu to Paramount. Paramount brought in assembly line methods to what had been a hand made show. Didn't work.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Kapow  
1/08/10 11:09am

That might be part of the problem, but it doesn't explain everything.

As Zack notes, some of the issues with these episodes are right there at script level. Perhaps the assembly line process reduced the amount of script tinkering prior to filming, but the scripts themselves aren't of the same quality as earlier seasons.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Kapow  
1/08/10 11:47am

I think the assembly line process did mess with the scripts, because in the first two seasons, they did frequently have noted actual sci-fi authors and script writers doing their scripts, and by the third season, it's just the cheapest hacks they could find. You can't build a great show going with the lowest bidder.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Kapow  
1/08/10 12:04pm

Is this explained at all by the cancellation / letter-writing campaign / revival of the series? Had they shut down the process, and then had to restart it without sufficient time to get enough good scripts in the can to propel a season?

This whole season is like a list of scripts that might have a good idea in them, but aren't really worked out in a professional way. Tholian Web, Wink of an Eye, Empath (ugh), Mark of Gideon, That Which Survives, Methuselah, All Our Yesterdays.

Interesting note on Wikipedia, if you go to the TOS episode list and click thru on the screenwriter for All Our Yesterdays, Jean Lisette Aroeste. She's one of only 4 writers with no prior television writing credits, to sell scripts to Star Trek. One of them was Trouble With Tribbles / David Gerrold, who turned out to be a real writer (Hugo and Nebula winner). The other 3 were season 3 scripts, writers who never made another TV sale. It wasn't all amateur hour, but a lot of it was.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Kapow

1/08/10 12:07pm

Compare to the Animated Series, which was damn well-written. Circumstances were different. They thought they were going to have a season 4 of Star Trek so they had some good scripts ready to go. Wound up using them on the animated series.

Exactly the opposite for season 3. They thought they \*weren't\* going to have a season 3, and then suddenly they had to.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Kapow

1/08/10 12:31pm

TAS was slow and talky for a cartoon, its pacing was more appropriate to a grownup show.

I dunno, maybe I'm generalizing. TAS had one masterpiece of an episode, "Yesteryear". I seem to recall there were other good ones too. But maybe it was as uneven as TOS was, with clunker episodes along with the good ones.

[Reply](#)

- [The Late DentArthurDent](#)Kapow

1/08/10 1:09pm

The 3rd season added Fred Freiberger as producer, and a lot of the bad decisions rested with him.

A few years later, Freiberger would be brought in to produce the second season of Space: 1999, and managed to kill that production as well. Admittedly, that show's first season was ponderous and slow at times, but his plan to make the 2nd season "less intellectual" and add more action was not what it needed...

[Reply](#)

- [SoCal Distortion](#)Kapow

1/08/10 1:10pm

Wasn't there an episode written by Larry Niven incorporating elements of his Known Space/Ringworld stuff? I seem to remember that being pretty cool. It has been many, many years since I've seen any episodes, so I can't really say how TAS holds up.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Kapow

1/08/10 4:58pm

It was an Animated episode

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Kapow

1/08/10 4:59pm

Regarding TAS:

1) It wasn't around long enough to overstay its welcome (like TOS).

2) Much of season 3 would have benefited from a cut from 45 to 23 minutes. The half hour TAS shows got in and got out without a lot of Walkin' and Talkin'

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Kapow

1/08/10 9:29pm

TAS has a higher "batting average" than TOS, IMHO—although this is mainly due to the third season of the live action show dragging the average down. Lots of good stuff in the Animated Series. "Yesteryear" is good enough to be considered canon.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Kapow

1/09/10 1:10am

I liked that they could show aliens with out the whole 'rubber suit' problem, and some of the stories were quite good animation. Nice to have the real voices too, and not some approximation. That said: Clunky Hanna-Barbera-style animation (yes, I know it wasn't HB), and the music kind of annoyed me. I've seen a few of them recently, and it holds up surprisingly well after you get past the 'gee, that looks old' factor.

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)Kapow

1/09/10 5:52pm

Some of the TAS stories had interesting premises, but all were soooo glacially paced that 25 min felt like 2 slow hours. The rest were just bad.

Yesteryear is rightfully a classic, and maybe Albatross. but I prefer the series' singular style over any of the stories.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Kapow

1/09/10 8:16pm

I remember liking The Counter-Clock Incident, with Robert April in command of the Enterprise. I was a kid of course, don't know if it holds up.

I also enjoyed the novelizations, by Alan Dean Foster. Star Trek Logs? Actually, for Counter-Clock, it might be the book version I remember enjoying, rather than the episode.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 12:14pm

McCoy as romantic lead

That happened more than once - in The Empath, didn't she kind of like him? And that Alice in Wonderland one...I think he had a love interest there too. You are right about his looks, but a seems to be a real charmer. Now, if he looked more like Karl Urban AND was charming, we'd have something.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart

1/08/10 1:47pm

Spore-controlled McCoy had some Suthun charm working in This Side of Paradise.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart

1/08/10 2:05pm

Yeah, but Spock had the love interest in that one. McCoy's only love interest when he got sporified was a mint julep.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart

1/08/10 2:17pm

Ok, how about McCoy with the two stripper-chicks on his arm after he's been healed at the end of Shore Leave?

Granted that they're probably robots or wax constructs or whatever. But seething Emily Banks couldn't get them off McCoy's arm fast enough. She was into him.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart  
1/08/10 3:04pm

Oh, and "Is There in Truth No Beauty?" - he's kinda charming with Miranda, I think.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart  
1/08/10 5:18pm

@ CDRJ: isn't a mint julep all anyone ever needs?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart  
1/08/10 6:52pm

Maybe I'm jst getting old, but I think McCoy looks quite dapper... Actually when I was a kid I'm not at all sure I realized he was older than the others... Well, thye probably all seemed old to me then...

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart  
1/08/10 7:28pm

C'mon, chicks totally dig doctors. They know exactly how to make a girl feel good.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)What Are You Looking At Sugart  
1/08/10 9:38pm

McCoy was a playa. One of the Dax hosts(DS9) remembered him well - gymnast Dax, if I remember correctly. And she was digging him a hundred years later.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 11:26am

'Rare' Episodes

Once again, these were episodes that played very rarely in my youth... 'Day' i knoew mostly from the photonovel (see below) and I'd seent he title of FTWIIHAIHTTS in a listing and was strangely fascinated/repelled by it...

I think I only saw either of them once in years of daily ST viewing as a kid.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Richelieu Jr  
1/08/10 1:41pm

Richelieu, I have the same experience with the rest of Season 3 after this set of episodes. I'd never seen the second half of this season as a child. I don't remember why, but I assume they just didn't get played since my Dad had every other one on tape for me. So even if Season 3 sucks for the most part, I have a great affection for them because they seem "newer" to me. I mean, there's no denying that



"Turnabout Intruder" or "Plato's Stepchildren" are bad episodes; they just have a different feel for me. I think I was able to rent a couple of them as a child but some of them I've only seen a handful of times as opposed to the dozens of times for the rest of the series as a child.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 2:09pm

I still think Turnabout Intruder is an excellent episode, almost a great one. It suffers from time crunch in the last act, compressing some stuff that should be spread out more; but is otherwise very good. I guess we'll argue about that in ~8 weeks.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 3:12pm

I'll have to re-watch it. I haven't seen it in ten years at least. I seem to remember the acting was silly, and also watching it as a 12 year old, I seem to remember thinking the whole thing about women not being able to rise to command seemed out of place in the utopian 23rd century setting (though certainly that wasn't the only case of that).

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr

1/08/10 6:43pm

That's another one that I somehow found erotic as a lad.. Hell, even the initailas are TA...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 5:00pm

Off Topic

Hey, anybody else all jacked up about the new Dollhouse tonight?

I'm surprised to say it, but I'm really going to miss that show.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 5:09pm

I too will miss Dollhouse. I am a sucker for Good People trying to push the boundaries.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 5:58pm

No doubt it will inspire another flurry of rapey commenting. This has been a rather rapey day on the AV Club.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 6:22pm

Does this rag smell like Chloroform to you?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet

1/08/10 7:00pm

Good people trying to push boundaries.. Like, erm.. Chekov?

[Reply](#)

- [adept42](#)Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 2:14pm

Captain Power?

Surely you mean Captain Planet. And how did it take this long for someone to catch this?

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)adept42  
1/08/10 2:47pm

I do believe it should be Captain Planet.

Wasn't Captain Power that show where you could shoot the TV screen with some gun whenever the bad guys with the flashing chest light thingies showed up? And had to avoid them shooting you back from the TV show? Did I dream that show up?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)adept42  
1/08/10 3:01pm

Twas. Fixed.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)adept42  
1/08/10 8:26pm

That and the gameplay between the toys and the show sucked ass. I remember having the little spaceship that Captain Power sat in and if the TV guns "hit" you, he's fly out of the ship due to "damage." I was excited as a small child until the show came on and it was fucking lame. I seem to remember it was harshly criticized for being basically about selling toys (and my parents were soft enough to buy them for me). I can definitely see the seizure thing.

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)Zack Handlen  
1/09/10 5:47pm

Pacing

After being a fan forever, I finally watched all of these TOS eps in order in whole for the first time last year.

I find the only really watchable eps to be the 2nd half of season 2 and the first half of season 3. Too many of all the rest are glacially paced (even for the time) and padded out to fill their running time. These two eps don't even come close.

I also find season 3 to be very well produced, despite the repoted budget problems, with inventive sets and costumes.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Adm Naismith  
1/09/10 8:37pm

What about the first half of season two? Amok Time, Doomsday Machine: those aren't "watchable"??

I might have to agree with you on the season 3 costumes, esp the chick costumes. Droxine's dress in Cloud Minders is amazing, and there are others.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Adm Naismith  
1/10/10 11:21am

Maybe we have different standards for costumes? Spectre of the Gun was cool, but "For the World Is Hollow" is the definition of thrift store tackiness. Apart from Natira's dress, it's just oceans of ugly fluorescent pastel.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 3:33pm

Understanding our new Shiny Overlord

Can't we be Agnostic about this and beleive that there is a Shiny God who wants us to kill and rape and hates laughter, but we can't understand why?

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/08/10 4:23pm

I gotta say, thanks to your avatar I can't read anything you write without automatically hearing it in Sheldon Cooper's voice. The above is especially magical. Bravo!

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/08/10 4:40pm

Thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 11:09pm

Shatner's Delight

(Set to "Rapper's Delight")

"All right!

In the heart, in the head;

I won't stay dead!

And then, I'll come back and do

the same to you -

I'll kill you!

And it goes on and on; the good old game of war!

Pawn Against pawn!

Stop-stop-stopping the bad guys!"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)St. God

1/09/10 9:10am

(!) Awesome! I'd filk the plot of "Day Of The Dove" to the tune of "Burning Down The House" by The Talking Heads, but by the time I finished it, no one would be reading this thread. (Why that particular song? Because of the quote, "only a fool fights in a burning house.")

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen

1/08/10 10:15am

if you boldly go where no man has gone before...

... are you going first?

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/08/10 11:01am

Well, shit on a stick and call it pudding...

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/08/10 11:46am

I often do.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
3/06/14 9:24pm

Sounds delicious!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Zack Handlen  
1/08/10 11:05am

Pacing/Directing/Writing

You put your finger on something key here, though I think you make too much of a difference between the directing and writing aspects of pacing. Obviously, the director determines coverage and is there to keep things 'moving along'. It's one of their main responsibilities.

On the other hand, as you point out: no mystery can equal no forward motion. Whatever the coverage (the number of angles assigned to impart a particular scene or piece of information) the importance of a shot is to give us just enough (no more) information to lead into the next one. Indeed, internally, shots should be composed to leave something out- someone's face, an identity, what they have in their hand- that we want to know, and then cut to that thing just when we need to know it, then away before we've had too long to see it. When we see a reaction shot, it should never be gratuitous, but because we'd like-no need- to know what that person is thinking at that moment.

An ideal sequence should be designed like a series of dominoes, each cascading into the next, giving us the forward motion we call pacing and falling to reveal the form of the structure, leading to the surprising, yet inevitable, ending.

The director designs those shots, plans the transitions, but the structure, the handing out of information, that comes from the screenplay. If you don't give the director any goodie's, he can't lay them out like Reese's Pieces (yes, I know that makes us ET) to lead us along...

[Reply](#)

- [TerryIsntBald](#) Zack Handlen  
4/02/10 5:51pm

Did they know rape was about power in the 60s?

I know this is super late, but I haven't seen anybody ask this. Even today everybody doesn't know that rape is about power and not sex. A few years ago I took a Human Sexuality class (only one of the required health classes with sex in the title and I'm a guy) and when the teacher told us rape was about power a lot of people were surprised. It's possible the writers were just thinking Chekov was crazy, then he noticed the Klingon looked like a hot human with brown paint rubbed on her face and got horny. It seems like in every western made during that era had a scene where a guy would look at woman with an evil smile and close the door as she screams and it was played either for laughs or as "no big deal, he hasn't had any in a while." I wasn't alive in the 60s so I don't know how the average person viewed rape, but from what I've seen in entertainment it was more of a "boys will be boys" action instead of someone who wants power and to control people.

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek: "The Tholian Web"/"Plato's Stepchildren"*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 15, 2010

[Comments \(127\)](#)



One of the most interesting criticisms I read of the new *Star Trek* movie came in Keith Phipps' review here on the AV Club. (My isn't that *convenient*. Don't forget to buy a T-shirt!) He pointed out that, for all its whiz-bang excitement, the reboot/re-imaging/reincarnation didn't really have much in the way of actual *thinking*. In fact, given its cavalier attitude towards narrative convenience, it's a film that favors distraction over discussion. I don't mean this as a criticism exactly—old school *Trek* can get creaky when it starts throwing big words around, and I like shiny as much as the next crow. Besides, given the time restrictions with a movie, there probably really wasn't room to get into a deep debate about the morality of time travel and the true nature of paradox. (Not that we couldn't have spared some of the jokes, maybe.)

I raise this only to introduce what was, for me, the most enjoyable aspect of this week's double feature: being reminded once again how much I really do love this series, and how much of that love comes from its commitment to sincere philosophical concern. Sure, it can get corny, and more than a little leading, but the simple fact that "The Tholian Web" and "Plato's Stepchildren" are as much interested in understanding the dilemmas at their heart as they are in the more visceral set-pieces is thrilling and, for a show four decades old, fresh. I can understand someone being put off by the pulpy dialogue, the over-acting, the cheesy sets and effects, but for me, digging *Trek* is about learning to embrace its absurdities and appreciate its willingness to keep asking questions.

"Tholian Web" also has something we see disappointingly little of: honest-to-god science fiction. The central concept, of a place where universes overlap, is clever, and there aren't any god-beings involved—and let's face it, "alternate universe" is just a hugely tempting source for those guys. Instead, we have an encounter with the titular alien race that isn't even the central point of the episode. This is more a collection of circumstances than one over-arching storyline; those circumstances are connected by location, thankfully, but there's no sense of one over-riding threat that needs to be resolved. Which is a nice change of pace. Once Kirk vanishes (along with the *Defiant*), Spock takes command of the ship, and the ep focuses on his and McCoy's attempts to stop crew insanity, rescue the captain, and avoid destruction at the hands of the Tholians. Also, they argue. A lot. Another reason to recommend "Web" is that it gives us an extra-strength dose of McCoy's carping and Spock's arrogance. I've come to welcome their conversations because, as pig-headed as the doctor gets and as dismissive as the half-Vulcan can be, I relish the ambiguity of it. There's something

refreshingly real about watching two people argue incessantly, not come to any real agreement, and still work together.

The *Enterprise* is searching for a missing ship, and they find it in one of the worst places to find a missing ship outside the Neutral Zone, a weird spot where the universe is thin and other universes bleed through. When Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and Chekov beam onto the *Defiant* (in some fairly impressive haz-mat suits, I might add; none of this "top doesn't connect to torso" crap we've seen before), the ship's crew is dead, apparently at each other's hands. We've seen the "madness that makes 'em murderous" effect, and it's not exactly a surprise when Chekov gets his own case of fish-eye lens; wouldn't be much of an episode if our heroes came across some sickness that *didn't* mess 'em up. Thankfully, the cause here isn't biological, as we begin to suspect when McCoy's hand passes through a corpse. It's not immediately obvious, but clearly, this isn't just a case of the crazy plague.

Things worsen when Scotty beams the away team back to the *Enterprise*. The universe friction causes a lot of problems for Engineering, and Scotty is only able to beam back three of the four before the *Defiant* vanishes completely. Unsurprisingly, it's Kirk who gets stuck behind. (I mean, unsurprising in the context of the episode, not unsurprising in this recap, which is unsurprising for completely different reasons since, y'know, I mentioned this two paragraphs ago.) Again we have to question the logic of Kirk's do-everything, give-everything approach. Not only did he go to the *Defiant* in the first place, which is a questionable but expected command decision, as soon as Scotty says he can't get the entire group at once, Kirk volunteers to stay behind. Because, obviously, a star ship commander is more important than the guy who presses the button marked "Phaser." (I'm mostly kidding here—it's not as though Kirk's willingness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his crew hasn't come up before. But I did find myself wondering if any of the away team weren't wishing for a spare Red Shirt when they heard the bad news. That's the drawback of sending all major characters on this sort of mission.)

It isn't soon after this that Chekov starts showing symptoms of mental disturbance. McCoy quickly (and impressively) figures out that this is caused by their proximity to the shifting planes of existence; this does make you wonder why, if there's enough Federation lore to know about the science behind the spot, as well as there being a pact between the Tholians and Star Fleet, that nobody had figured out this cause and effect relationship before. We do get a quick (and smart) justification for the tragedy of the maybe a little too *Defiant*, though. Given that the area screws with the *Enterprise's* system immediately, and only gets worse the longer they stay where they are, it's all too easy to imagine the ghost ship getting locked in place, desperately trying to break free, and growing more homicidal with each passing moment.

The main source of McCoy and Spock's rift, apart from McCoy's basic distrust of aliens and Spock's contempt for anyone who isn't purely logical, is that Spock's choice to fire on the first Tholian ship they encounter ends up hurting the *Enterprise*, and considerably worsening their chances at either getting Kirk back or getting away. It's not that Spock made a bad choice here—the other ship fired first. It's that the situation grows even more dangerous when other Tholians, after the attack on one of their own, start building an "energy web" that, once completely, means bye bye spaceship. ("Ware the Etch-A-Sketch of Doom!") Mostly, though, I think McCoy just can't understand how someone could make rational decisions in a crisis without betraying any emotional strain. He even tells Spock that he doesn't understand his motives, and assumes Spock has a greater ambition than I think the character really does. One of the most frustrating experiences in life is meeting a sane, likable individual who completely and utterly fails to understand where you're coming from. From being most familiar with the movies (by which point their relationship had settled considerably), I'd always believed Spock and McCoy to be good friends who don't always see eye to eye. But here on the series, it's more like colleagues with mutual respect and occasional grudging admiration, but not a whole lot of trust.

There's also a running gag with Kirk appearing to various crew-members as a ghost, because he's not quite dead yet, just trapped in some alternate universe. The biggest criticism you can throw at "Web" is that, in the end, there isn't any huge pay-off to all of this. McCoy figures out an antidote to the crazies (a derivative of Klingon Nerve Gas! Odd that there would be a comparatively easy biological cure to such a complex physiological and psychological disturbance), Spock gets the *Enterprise* back to where it belongs, and Kirk is beamed on board, just moments before running out of oxygen. There may be some plot holes in here, Kirk's acting as the in-between guy was goofy, but this was solid, overall. We got to see Uhura in her off hours, and we got to witness Kirk's Last Tape, which was surprisingly low-key, if awfully situationally specific. (Does he have a back-up tape if McCoy and/or Spock were also killed in whatever conflict ended

his life?)

I also enjoyed "Plato's Stepchildren," which is mostly known these days as "that episode where Kirk has to kiss Uhura." This was something of a big deal with the ep first aired, being arguably the first interracial kiss to air on television—despite the fact that the kiss was far from pleasurable for either party. There's something sad about that, really. In 1968, an African American woman and a white man went where no one on TV had gone before, and it still had to be forced and unpleasant to watch. And hell, not minutes after that kiss, Kirk is threatening Uhura with a whip. Clearly, not really a sex-positive message.

Historical value aside, I may be going against the general consensus once again, but I thought this was very much not bad. Yes, Kirk and Spock's mind control acting is silly, yes the conversations with Alexander the dwarf can verge on condescending, and yeah, there's all that serious talk that, to the unkind ear, could play as clunky and overwrought. But I think, with the right amount of patience, the talking works, and the hammy acting can be surprisingly convincing if you're willing to take it at face value. There's a lot of disturbing, freaky sadism happening here, and while calling it Lynchian might be a stretch, I was impressed at how creeped out I was during some scenes. And hey, there's a lovable dwarf! C'mon. That counts for something.

One strike against "Stepchildren" is that it seems like we've been here before; we had our Toga World adventure way back at the start of season 2, with "Who Mourns For Adonais." But really, all the Grecian trappings on display in this episode are a false front. What we've got here are a group of telekinetic super-beings who actually spent some time on Earth during the height of Greece's golden years, took notes on what they liked, and then kept on flying through the stars until they could find their own place to live. They call it Platonius, and while it's pretty enough (at least, the two rooms we see aren't half bad, even if I expected to see Pearl and Brain Guy wandering through), these aren't exactly the kind of folks you want to spend time with. There's eighty-eight of them, and all but one has extraordinary powers, thanks to the magic of mass eugenics and good eating. (Technically, the powers come from the eating, but they don't stress that in the brochure, kills the mystique.) But while good breeding can provide physical beauty, it apparently hasn't done much in the way of instilling the Platonians with ethics, as Kirk and friends quickly learn.

The set-up is that the ruler of Platonius, Parmen, injures his leg, and they send out a distress signal for a doctor. Kirk, McCoy, and Spock respond—according to Spock, the planet doesn't have any life forms on it, which it clearly does, so maybe someone might want to get the machine checked. McCoy does wonders for Parmen, although they get a glimpse of the man's true power when, during a delusional state, his telekinesis even throws the *Enterprise* into fits. Everything seems fine, although Alexander looks worried. He's the court buffoon, the only one around without any mind whammy ability, and considering the weird horrors that Parmen and the rest put Kirk and Spock through, it's hard to imagine how unpleasant the past few centuries have been for the guy.

Things take a turn for the inevitable when Parmen decides he wants to keep McCoy around, and McCoy doesn't want to go. To change his mind, Parmen starts messing with Kirk and Spock. Here's where the other big strike hits, because a good chunk of the remainder of this episode is spent watching Kirk and Spock get put through their paces. If this doesn't affect you, you're going to get bored fast. I found it unsettling and sad, because as ridiculous as Shatner may be, he's still someone we've spent two seasons plus getting attached to, and seeing him forced to make a literal ass of himself is ugly. Even worse, they make Spock laugh. Then they make him cry. It's—it's pretty awful, really. And "Stepchildren" treats this betrayal of Spock's core self with the dignity and weight it deserves.

That's what really sold me on all this; there is some camp value in Shatner, Nimoy, and Kelley twitching and flailing, but everyone involved takes the whole problem seriously, and when they aren't being tormented, the our heroes are discussing what's wrong with the Platonians, and what makes them so vicious. Kirk gives Alexander a speech about how "size, shape, or color make no difference." (Huh, he doesn't mention sex. Surely that isn't supposed to be included under size?) It's simultaneously hopelessly naive, ridiculous, and neat. Alexander is by far the most interesting of the natives, too; his realization that he's not truly inferior to his tormentors, that by some reckonings he's actually far beyond them, is, again, corny as Kansas in August. But not bad. Not bad at all.

Admittedly, the resolution here could've used some work. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy determine that the Platonians get



their amazing powers through eating local food, with its high levels of kironine, a made up element that can do whatever we want it to do. They give themselves a pure hit of the stuff, uncut, that eventually gives them twice the power that any of the locals have managed to achieve. One more forced theatrical (this one involving Nurse Chapel, Uhura, and that kiss we already mentioned), and Kirk takes command. The writing really gets goosy during the kiss-and-kill play, as Chapel talks about how long she's wanted to be close to Spock and Uhura comforts herself with how awesome Kirk is—they're being forced to act, not talk, and since they're just embracing and not, y'know, doing the deed, I'm not sure I buy the full confessional. But still, it's freaky. The big criticism is that, in keeping with the usual practice, Kirk gives a speech, warns Parmen not to screw around again because he's letting Starfleet know about the planet, and then he leaves. Honestly, given how much power Parmen has already shown, once Kirk is no longer around to police them, how fast do you think this is going to degrade again? How hard would you work to keep your heaven safe from people who want to judge you and tell you how immoral you are? At least the *Enterprise* takes Alexander when they go.

So yeah, not too bad at all. There's roughly the same issue I mentioned last week, with third acts that don't hinge on new discoveries or unexpected resolutions, but this is still solid entertainment. And it's *about* something. They're still trying, and Kirk's not falling in love with an Indian princess, and that's good.

#### Grades:

"The Tholian Web": B+

"Plato's Stepchildren": B+

#### Stray Observations:

- To be honest, the grading is become more and more abstract with each passing week. So everybody knows they're suggestions, and not rules, right?
- It's easy to overlook, since it's basically Spock's only setting, but nobody does dry like Nimoy: "The renowned Tholian punctuality."
- He also sings! It's no "The Legend of Bilbo Baggins," but Spock's forced performance of "Bitter Dregs" is quite credible:
- Kirk's speech to Alexander about tolerance is undercut slightly by his "I have a little surprise for you" pun at the end. Dick.
- Next week, it's "Wink Of An Eye" and "Empath"

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (125)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 11:03am

Carneys

I have to say, I don't care for any program whatsoever featuring a dwarf, or midget, or little person. Seems to me they're always used for shock value or comic relief or something and I think the fact that they are 3 feet tall in a 6 foot world is plenty. Leave them alone.

[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 11:13am

That gum you like is going to come back in style.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [postdlf](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 11:19am

It's for the good of society. If not for gratuitous roles in science fiction and fantasy, there would be an epidemic of out-of-work dwarf actors knocking over convenience stores.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 11:32am

They can always get jobs on some hit new TLC reality show.

[Reply](#)

- [The Tuck Pendleton Machine](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 11:33am

Could they reach all the way up to the counter to take the cash?

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 11:55am

Sure they can. I hear they form up like Voltron.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 1:04pm

@ El Santo

Was that the 5 lion voltron or the 15+ car Voltron?

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 1:06pm

Lion Voltron. To assume that they'd form up Car Voltron ... why, that's just insulting.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 1:15pm

I just wanted to make sure. And Thanks for the image of an all midget Voltron, rising out of the castle to fight a RoBeast.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 1:49pm

Can I just say that Peter Dinklidge is awesome? Everything I have seen hi in (30 Rock, Elf, Prince Caspian) his character takes no crap from anyone.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 2:14pm

Bonus points to Urgh. After Zach's comment about the episode being almost Lynchian someone had to say it.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 2:23pm

Have we all forgotten how Rose Nylund dated a little person? A respected doctor, no less? And how she was embarrassed to be seen with him? And how her dead husband appeared in a dream, but he appeared as Billy Barty, which wasn't creepy in the least? AND THEN the little doctor dumped Rose for being a goy?

We all grew a little that day... inside.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 2:55pm

Now we need the Golden Girls to have an episode by episode review

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 3:41pm

I vote that Zack move on to the Golden Girls after he's done with Season 3 Trek. I'm not joking.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 4:19pm

Dinklage has a nice rant in Living In Oblivion (his first movie) about the use of lazy dwarf=weird shorthand in indy cinema. It's pretty perceptive and hilarious, like a lot of that movie.

He also talked about it in his RR with T-Rob.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 4:24pm

Don't take this as being in favor of reviews (every episode is the same anyway), but I got stuck watching a bunch of golden girls re-runs with my wife last summer, and they were surprisingly good. The plots were paper-thin (one featured the Girls getting mistaken for hookers and taken to jail), but the dialogue was pretty damn snappy.

And just the fact that we all know who Rose Nylund is proves that we've all watched a little more GG than we care to admit.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 6:08pm

Don't worry, Herc, I don't think anyone is seriously demanding a Golden Girls review.

HOWEVER... I noticed that Firefly has never been formally reviewed. I'm not saying this to be clever. I honestly would like to see that show examined and discussed. And at only 13 eps, it should be a fairly easy one to tackle. I'd appreciate it, since I'm one of those who's seen only a couple of episodes (and yes, I did see the first two in order) but never really gotten into it. It might be nice if Zack tackles it just to expound on the appeal, or lack of appeal if he's not a fan.

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 6:17pm

GG was transgressive for its time, holds up quite well and is still one of the few shows to star an all-AARP cast.

Isn't it about time for a movie/series with an all-dwarf cast? If everyone is small and freaky, then no one is! "The Terror of Tiny Town" remake can't be far off.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 8:13pm

I would not mind a review of Firefly episodes. But disable the comments.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Gaga](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/15/10 8:31pm

Why is it that men become such fools over the normal size head?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/16/10 1:44am

Now that you mention it, a Firefly / Serenity review sounds like a good idea. I've got both on DVD, on loan from my cousin, but I haven't gotten around to watching them. from what I've heard, and given Zach's track record of reviewing Sci-fi, it sounds like it'd be worth my while to follow along.

But that doesn't mean I'm going to stop banging the drum for some TNG reviews...

[Reply](#)

- [postdlf](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/16/10 11:34am

I'll admit to having watched a lot of Golden Girls. A friend and I still occasionally break out with the theme song, which always ends with a lot of maudlin hugging and sobbing.

TNG reviews would kick ass. Then we'll see how many people agree that Robert Plant's vocals in "No Quarter" sound just like Deanna Troi every time she got possessed by an alien intelligence (which occurred an average of 3.5 times a season).

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/16/10 4:09pm

Not one word of acknowledgment for Michael Dunn's performance as Alexander? I had never seen him in his occasional role as Miguelito Loveless on Wild Wild West until some years later, and he was great in both roles.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/16/10 7:14pm

I saw 'Serenity' and quite liked it, though it's a bit glib and abit sterile... I tried to watch the series, but the first episode (yes, the 'real' first episode, the pilot, jsut dragged to much for me and I never picke dit back up... Plus I fear they solved a lot of the mystery in the film, tying up loose ends...

That said, I'd gladly play along with some reviews hereabouts...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/10 10:55am

Tholian Web

One of my favorite episodes of TOS. Looking it up on Memory Alpha to refresh some of my memory (like why the Enterprise didn't just blow the hell out of the Tholians in the first place), I found the Japanese title of the episode a little more to-the-point: "Crisis of Captain Kirk, Who Was Thrown into Different-Dimensional Space."

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 11:01am

Its no wonder they lost the war, with all their long titles and quirky punctuation.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 11:01am

I can imagine Japanese Trekkies getting their hands on the original version and saying, "'Tholian Web'? What does that even mean? How are you supposed to know what goes on in this episode? Bah!"

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 11:24am

Huh, shakes. You don't know what you're gettin'.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 11:52am

Also one of my favorite episodes. The story might be ludicrous, but I always thought it was well done. Also, when I was growing up, this episode didn't air with the rest so I didn't see it until a few years later, so it always had a sort of "new" quality to it.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 12:19pm

Add me to the parade of folks with admiration for "Tholian Web." If it's not the best 3rd season episode, it's pretty damn close.

Also, it was one of the first Trek episodes I ever saw, and those inter-dimensional scenes of ghost Kirk trying to get help always kinda freaked me out.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 1:47pm

I also agree that Tholian Web is one of my favorites. It has that every crisis happening at the same time tension that can't be beat.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 3:43pm

Really, I'm just glad Zack got to watch a twofer where one of the two wasn't close to awful. These two are really okay. Not the best, but far from the worst, and after "Spock's Brain", I imagine getting back to watchable, enjoyable Trek is a relief.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 5:55pm

This is as good a place as any to mention my favorite title-translated-to-foreign-language-then-literally-translated-back-to-English. Apparently, in Russia, "Die Hard" is called "A Tough Nut to Crack."

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 6:36pm

In Hong Kong, Army of Darkness is called "Captain Supermarket" a title superior to the original in every way.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 6:42pm

@Dumbledore: I bet Raimi and Campbell are kicking themselves that they didn't think of that title first. It IS too perfect!

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut  
1/15/10 7:16pm

Even better, The Day of the Dove in Japan: "Mystery in Space! Eat out the Anger!"

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 12:45am

I had always known it as "Mystery in Space: Eating Angry!"

All of the Japanese titles are wonderful: "Where No Man Has Gone Before" is "Bright Eye," "Dagger of the Mind" is "Madman Come From Demon Island," "Shore Leave" is "Funny Funny Amusement Planet"...

<http://www.mars.dti.ne.jp/~...>

[Reply](#)

- [Metal Gear did me a Solid](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 1:55am

In Mongolia, Live Free or Die Hard was known as "Hard Nuts 4.0" True Story.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 2:09am

The Pianist was "Battlefield Pianist." I have never been able to figure that one out.

Hard Nuts 4.0 should be a reality program on Spike TV.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 8:59am

in French 'TW' is 'LE Piegé des Tholiens' (The Trap of the Tholians', so it's pretty close (though it isn't always. i have a hell of a time finding the episodes I want to show my girlfriend... What the hell were 'Ils étaient des Millions' (There were Millions of Them) or 'Trois Femmes dans un Vaisseau' (Three

Women in a Ship)? there are others, that like the Japanese simply explain the plot. The French (and the Germans) LOVE doing this.)

"Plato's Stepchildren" is 'La Descendance', which I'm sure you can figure out, but still. Why not 'Les Enfants Adoptifs de Platon'?

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 10:48am

I'd say "Trois Femmes" is probably "Mudd's Women," though "Millions" could be about a number of things- either the overpopulation crisis in "The Mark of Gideon" or one of the last of a dying race episodes like "The Man Trap" or "Devil in the Dark." I'd go with the latter category, since it's past-tense, but this could make a fun quiz if you had more of these.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut  
1/16/10 7:06pm

Wow, JJ, good job!

"3 Femmes" is indeed 'Mudd's Women' and "Millions is your number 3: 'Devil in the Dark', not at all obvious. I'm impressed!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Right Wingnut  
1/19/10 3:41pm

@St. God, thanks for linking those Japanese titles. Awesome.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Generic Poster](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 12:17pm

Kirk's Last Orders

I always thought Spock and McCoy were huge dicks for denying that they reviewed Kirk's last orders.

Also, another example of them forgetting about the whole "Spock can't lie" thing whenever it is convenient to do so.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 12:31pm

The whole "Spock can't lie" thing was never true to begin with. Vulcans lie all the time, and when they get called on it they just find a logical reason for doing so.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 12:41pm

Where did the "Spock can't lie" thing come from? I've heard it stated by fans as an iron-clad fact. It's obviously nonsense. When did it originate?

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 1:06pm

Jim: It's a line of dialogue given to the Romulan commander in "The Enterprise Incident." She tells Spock in front of Kirk that she's heard a myth that states a Vulcan cannot lie, and Spock replies "It is no myth."

But aside from the obvious dodge (what else is a liar going to say in that situation?) you have the fact that Spock is only half-Vulcan. Kind of hard to believe that somebody that gullible could rise to the rank of Commander in a back-biting institution like the Romulan military, but there you have it.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 1:08pm

But we realize that Spock and bones are no good without Kirk. That's why he's the captian, that why he gets to bang alien babes, that's why he gets to do whatever he wants.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 1:11pm

I am pretty sure there was an episode where Kirk was court-martialed for killing a crewman (aybe it was even called, "The Court-Martial"?) and they put Spock on the stand and give him the "swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, etc." bit and he says flat out, "Vulcans can not lie."

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 1:50pm

Cue Majel Barrett:  
"Incorrect!"

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 1:58pm

Zis guy is also correct. Savek was also freaked about Spock lying to Kahn in ST II:TWOK.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 2:21pm

^ He didn't lie, he exaggerated. Likewise, Lt. Valeris in Star Trek VI doesn't lie, she makes a choice. Also, every time someone on Voyager has a pon farr freakout they always say it's something else.

Seriously, Vulcans lie all the time.

[Reply](#)

- [The Moose with Loose Poops](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 2:27pm

Half-vulcan. He can only tell half-truths.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 2:27pm

I mentioned in last week's comments, the Star Trek novel The Final Reflection (1984), by John M Ford. There's a bit in there that Klingons also believe that Vulcans cannot lie. One of the Klingon characters even says something to the effect that, if it were to be discovered that Vulcans could lie then (something bad would happen). Something like, a lot of Vulcans would be shot out into space, or similar.



That myth was really widespread.

[Reply](#)

- [DCRJ](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 3:53pm

I agree, this is one of those things Trek through out there, and it quickly became obvious that this was supposed to be a sort of ethnic myth or stereotype.

There's nothing inherent in Vulcan philosophy that would prohib lying. In fact, if lying is "logical" in a particular instance (to save thousands of lives, perhaps) then they would lie in a green blooded minute.

[Reply](#)

- [The Moose with Loose Poops](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 4:01pm

Maybe when Spock said "It is not a myth" he meant "It isn't rooted in Vulcan mythological history" and not "It's true." Shifty language, hobgoblin!

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 4:10pm

Maybe Spock's a freak, from a race of freaks. Mabye he belongs in the circus, right next to the DOG. FACED. BOY.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Generic Poster  
1/15/10 5:29pm

I can see how the hole "Vulcans can't lie" myth can be used to gain a strategic advantage, but as ethnic myths go, I think "black guys have bigger dicks" is better.

It sure would have made "The Enterprise Incident" more interesting.

Romulan Commander: "I have heard a myth that Vulcans have bigger dicks."

Spock: "It is not a myth. AWWWW YEAH." (cue slap bass)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Generic Poster  
1/16/10 4:26pm

The "Vulcans never bluff" line from season 2 is a nice follow-on to the poker dialog with Spock in Corbomite Maneuver from season 1.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 12:30pm

Music

I know season 3 is usually looked at as being the worst in many ways, but I've noticed in rewatching these episodes along with these writeups that the music is season 3 is fantastic. I think it is the best this season out of the three. I enjoyed the music in the Tholian episode; the little flourishes when McCoy's hand pass through things are great. The music when Uhura sees Kirk and then runs to tell McCoy is very effective. I'm really enjoying the music of this season overall.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God

1/15/10 12:51pm

Season 2 has the Decapodian National Anthem and therefore wins.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

1/15/10 1:11pm

Plato's Stepchildren original score by Alexander Courage, one of 2 he did in season 3 (along with Enterprise Incident). This was the last music to be recorded for the original series: on 10/25/1968 according to the Jeff Bond book. Bond writes:

"Courage had originated the music of the original Star Trek, and he brought it to a close with the last episode to be scored... Plato's Stepchildren provided some of the series' most egregious examples of unintentional comedy... Courage gamely attempted to capture a sense of classical Greek culture with another subdued and moody score."

Bond goes on, perhaps unfairly, to say that Courage's efforts here only add to a sense of ennui. Since the bad guys in this episode suffer primarily from ennui, I wonder if Bond just didn't get it. Oh, and he says Nimoy composed the music for the Bitter Dregs scene. Context is unclear about whether Nimoy created both words and music, or if the poem existed prior (maybe in the script) and Nimoy just made up the accompaniment.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

1/15/10 1:51pm

Season 3's music is the weakest. To begin with, only 9 original scores this season, compared to 11 for the first 2 (12 for season 1 if you count The Cage). So there's less music. Then, 3 of them are by George Duning, so right away a third of the season 3 scores are just annoying.

And I think there's no home run here. In his book Bond praises Fred Steiner's score for Elaan of Troyius, and Gerald Fried's score for Paradise Syndrome, and Jerry Fielding's score for Spectre of the Gun. So let's say those are good ones. But none of that music became "iconic" the way some of the music in prior seasons did.

Compare to season 2. You hear the Amok Time or Doomsday Machine scores, and you're like "HELL YEAH!" You recognize them instantly. Season 2 also has the Who Mourns For Adonais score, and Mirror Mirror. Three scores by Fred Steiner, three by Gerald Fried, and one by Sol Kaplan. Ok, two from Duning, but at least it wasn't three. There's also a Jerry Fielding score (Tribbles).

Season 1's music is primarily by Alexander Courage and Fred Steiner. Steiner's Charlie X score is amazing for how much mileage they got out of it. A lot of the cues were re-recorded as library clips and used in season 2 (maybe in 3 also). So the stings and other stuff, you hear it thruout the entire series. Steiner also did full scores for Corbomite Maneuver and Mudd's Women; and part scores for Balance of Terror and What Are Little Girls Made Of. Great stuff in the part scores: the Romulan theme from Balance was substantially reworked into season 2's Mirror Mirror, and the Ruk Attacks theme from Little Girls is just friggin awesome. Sol Kaplan's score for Enemy Within is a masterpiece.

Season 1's peaks might not be as high as season 2's. (Amok Time and Doomsday Machine, nothing touches them.) But points for establishing the musical themes or boundaries for the series, and at least one absolute masterpiece in Kaplan's Enemy Within, to go with a ton of excellent and iconic cues from Steiner and Courage.

Season 3's music: some good stuff, but definitely the weakest.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
1/15/10 1:53pm

NB: Tholian Web score completely tracked from prior scores. No original music.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)St. God  
1/15/10 2:21pm

Has anyone else noticed that there's a little "whew, everything's okay now" theme—just a few bars, on harmonica I believe—the crops up occasionally in season 2 and seems to have been reused in The Adventures of Brisco County, Jr.? Or have my ears gone insane?

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)St. God  
1/15/10 2:41pm

Who composed the "Spock making a funny" flute cue?

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
1/15/10 3:53pm

I wonder then why the music stood out to me. Of course you are right. I can't think of Doomsday Machine or Amok Time without thinking of the music, but it seems more...integrated into those episodes? Whereas I noticed the music in season 3 as its own thing. Also, I was drunk, so there's that. (Plato's Stepchildren is much more fun when inebriated.)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
1/15/10 4:42pm

@ Chico:

Dunno if this is the one you're thinking of, but listen to the very end of Doomsday Machine. There's a cue under or just after Kirk's line about how he found one planet killer to be quite sufficient. Some lilting woodwind jingle (I think it's clarinet) that smashes right into the closing Enterprise flyby music. You can play it on Amazon. Go to the TV soundtrack vol 2 page:

<http://www.amazon.com/Star-...>

Play track 13, "One's Enough".

Is that the one?

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)St. God  
1/15/10 11:32pm

Jim: Very similar. I think it was a clarinet/flute combo. Can't remember what eps they used it in, but they paid homage to it in TNG.

Had no idea they made so many of these albums...

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)St. God  
1/16/10 12:09am

The music I most associate with Trek is that Romulan theme from Balance of Terror/Mirror Mirror. I used to think it was in every episode, but I guess it's only in those two, which happen to be two of the best. That little tune is so simple and so awesome. It perfectly conveys a situation that's getting increasingly tense. I actually hum it to myself when that happens in real life. Seems to me like it might have inspired the Star Wars Imperial March a little bit too.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)St. God  
1/16/10 4:46pm

JimZipCode - I like Duning's music, a lot. It's not enough to say that it annoys you; what about it - as music - don't you like? I can tell you what I do like: the rhythmic suppleness, the melodies built from thirds (forming into sevenths and ninths), etc.

Many summers ago I tried out for Jeopardy and stayed in an empty USC dorm room for \$14 a night; at the USC library there was a Star Trek archive (no photocopies allowed, note-taking in pencil only). They had the cue sheets for "The Empath" and "Is There In Truth No Beauty?" along with production memos, call sheets, etc. - it specified "closed set" (as you'd expect) for the last act of "Empath." I mention this because Fred Steiner's famous 7-note Romulan cue from "Balance of Terror" was interpolated into one of those Duning scores; it was called out by Steiner's name and the name of the cue, "Black Ship Tension." This may be the only cue that appeared in all three seasons of the show.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
1/19/10 2:49pm

Now THAT'S interesting.

Black Ship Tension was a cue from season 2's Mirror Mirror. It was, as you say, an adaptation of his Romulan theme from season 1's Balance of Terror.

Supposedly the rules were that if a first-season cue was re-used in a later season, then it had to be re-recorded for that season. According to Jeff Bond's book, "'library' cue sessions were usually tacked onto original score sessions, and a variety of cues which had proved useful (for example, Fred Steiner's various 'zap' cues from Charlie X) were re-recorded for use in later episodes, often with varying lengths and tempi." He then lists the library cues. They're all by Courage or Fried or Steiner. Black Ship Tension is not in this list.

Who knows whether that means anything at all. I've found Bond's info good, but that doesn't mean it's perfect. And Steiner may have re-used that theme in season 3, for the Elaan of Troyius or Spock's Brain scores.

When you say "interpolated": are you saying they re-used a cue? Or are you saying Duning wrote the theme into the score he was writing?

I would love to see cue sheets for every episode, including the fully-tracked episodes. Bond prints some in his book. Not the complete info, but enough for fans: the cue name, original episode #, composer, and length of cue. But the selection of cue sheets seems pretty random: those episodes for which the music has not been released in any form, which makes sense, but also for example Journey To Babel, which had no new music recorded for it.

RE: Duning — I'm not musicologist enough to know what, in terms of melody construction & harmonizing etc, fails to please me in those scores. I also haven't listened to them recently. I know that I don't love the orchestration. Syrupy, with harps and some electronic shit. I don't know. They don't sound right. They feel like elevator muzak versions of Star Trek music..

By the way, I posted a reply to your music comment about the Is There In Truth No Beauty score, in the comments to that episode.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [urgh](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 11:00am

Empress Hoshi Sato!

I only know The Tholian Web from the extremely silly two-part episode of Star Trek: Enterprise set in the Mirror Universe. They suggest that the other plane of existence that the Defiant slips into is the same alternate universe of "Mirror, Mirror".

From this write-up, though, that doesn't seem to be how it would work. Do they suggest what happens to the Defiant in the original Star Trek episode?

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivourgh](#)

1/15/10 11:14am

No, not really. That was just retconning by a horrible show in order to salvage ratings.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnuturgh](#)

1/15/10 11:33am

They never say where the Defiant goes. And the two-part Mirror Universe episodes were entertaining. The last season of Enterprise was actually pretty good (minus the first two episodes) and dealt with some continuity stuff that makes sense.

[Reply](#)

- [urghurgh](#)

1/15/10 11:51am

I'll agree, Right Wingnut. Sure, they were mining the past heavily, but it was clever. ("Here's why Klingons used to look different!")

I didn't watch the show before they brought in Brent Spiner as a guest star, but apparently it was all about fighting time travelers and ham-handed 9/11 allegories. Not interesting!

This reverence to the past backfired a bit, though; the last episode of Enterprise was basically just an episode of The Next Generation. I'm fine with that, but it did seem like Bakula's not-that-interesting crew got robbed.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnuturgh](#)

1/15/10 12:28pm

You are right about the first two episodes and the last of season four sucking balls. Starting with the Augment episodes (with Spiner) and then moving on into why the Klingons looked different, plus a series of episodes dealing with the start of the Federation, Vulcan/Romulan stuff, and a pretty good couple of episodes dealing with the Terra Prime movement, season four was very good.

The novels that take place after the series are actually pretty good, and they even completely change the final episode so Tucker doesn't actually die in a stupid fashion. Plus, it deals with The Romulan War, so that is kind of interesting too.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gagaugh](#)

1/15/10 3:10pm

Also fun is the three story collection "Glass Empires". The first story picks up at the end of "Through a Mirror Darkly", with the beginning of the Sato Dynasty of the Terran Empire. The second continues the story of "Mirror, Mirror" and what Spock decides to do with his knowledge of the Federation universe and the inevitable downfall of the Empires. The third continues the story of the mirror universe in the TNG era. I haven't read the third yet (currently watching DS9 so I'm waiting to get to "Crossover" at least).

I agree with Wingnut, Enterprise was pretty good in the fourth season, aside from the corny Nazi episodes (though, watching the Enterprise dog-fighting with Stukas was pretty cool) and the horrible, horrible last episode.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...> Oh, and "Through a Mirror Darkly may have been a bit silly, but I can forgive much when the cast is having so much fun, T'pol and Hoshi are dressing (and acting in Linda Park's case) slutty, and they give me a completely awesome opening title sequence (, which made up for three and a half seasons of that awful Patch Adams song.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnuturgh](#)  
1/15/10 4:12pm

Glass Empires is great, and so are the next set of three stories in Shattered Mirror (I believe that is it's title). Do yourself a favor and check out the Myriad Universe's collection as well- there are some great alternate Star Trek history stories in them.

A new Mirror Universe novel deals more with what the second short story about Spock and the destruction of the Terran Empire. From what I can tell if you've read one, the new story just expands more of the history, so you might get a bit more of Curzon Dax pissing off Gorkon.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horseurgh](#)  
1/15/10 4:49pm

wait...you watched all of Enterprise before getting to DS9?

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gagaugh](#)  
1/15/10 5:01pm

No, I watched both during their original runs, Enterprise again when SciFi re-aired it last year in (more or less) correct order, and am starting on DS9 again now that I have Netflix and don't have to buy all seven seasons. DS9 has been my favorite Trek since it aired, and probably always will be. I've been wanting to watch it again since it ended...

[Reply](#)

- [St. Godurgh](#)  
1/16/10 12:48am

Season Four was the best but it was far from good all around. The lizard people episode sucked shit (supposedly Levar Burton was openly ashamed of having directed the episode). The zombie Vulcan episode wasn't great as I remember. The Soong episodes were good though, as were the Klingon ones. Enterprise for the most part in my opinion wasn't very good, but when it was good, it was certainly better than Voyager.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrurgh](#)  
1/16/10 7:09pm

I quite like Enterprise and will put it's four seasons up against the first four season of any of the other show first four, aprt TOS.

The song however should be prosecuted along with bush and Cheney, and possibly before.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stoolurgh](#)  
1/19/10 11:39am

That reminds me of a funny story I heard about Rod Stewart...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/10 1:12pm

Dry, logical Spock

I dislike to quibble with Zack's solid-as-usual writeup, but I mentioned in comments a million years ago that although we're trained to believe Spock's always dry and intellectual, there are at least half a dozen episodes in the show's run where he's forced by drugs or aliens or pon farr to lose his cool. They went to that well often enough that it lost a lot of its shock value by the time this episode rolls around, and I think that might explain some of the fan fatigue here.

"I'm not going back, Jim!"

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax

1/15/10 1:47pm

How often did they hit that note, really? Twice a season?

Season 1: Naked Time, This Side of Paradise.

Season 2: Amok Time, Return to Tomorrow.

(Does evil bearded Spock from Mirror Mirror count?)

Season 3: Is There in Truth No Beauty, Plato's Stepchildren.

That's not that many.

On the other hand, it is 7 or 8% of the episodes, maybe that is a lot. If you knew someone who acted a certain way 8% of the time, that would be part of his character. Not really a departure.

"Oh crap, Spock's in one of his mood's again."

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Ajax

1/15/10 2:27pm

That's an interesting question - DOES Evil Spock count? Maybe he was just acting logically, unemotionally evil.

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)Ajax

1/15/10 3:07pm

99.9% of the time, just cruising through space, between missions, he's acting "normally". The few times he's acting completely differently? Well, therein lies a tale, my friends ...

I find it similar to how the most bad-ass, unbeatable characters are always getting smacked down hard when a new threat comes to town. All those times that a baddie comes aboard, and tries to start trouble, but is quickly restrained by Worf? Yeah, that's not a story worth telling, so we never see it.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Ajax

1/16/10 12:23am

Jim: He also got a nice long "emoting" scene when he mind-melded with the Horta in Devil in the Dark. PAIN!

mizerock: You've got a good point there. In a similar example, the creators of Justice League mentioned in a DVD commentary that during the first season they went out of their way to knock the snot out of Superman all the time, hoping thereby to demonstrate that the threat posed by the villain-

of-the-week was truly serious. Unfortunately, the fan reaction was "look how wussy they've made Superman!" TV is very much a show-don't-tell medium, and when somebody is being talked up as a badass but gets tossed around in everything we actually see...

Happily, they largely corrected this for Superman in season 2 (and for Worf in later seasons of TNG and DS9.)

Giasia: Another good point, and we shouldn't forget that Spock's dad is almost the uber-Vulcan in terms of being logical — as the ambassador to the UFP, he represents the whole planet, so talk about setting an example! That kind of parental pressure can cause any kid to overcompensate.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#) Ajax

1/16/10 12:32am

As a coda to the Justice League tangent, it always amused me on that show how the other characters would gasp in alarm when Supes got tossed into buildings that crumbled and fell on him or pounded into the ground by a super-strong villain with a handy stone statue.

Yeah, right, guys. THIS is the chunk of concrete that's finally gonna kill the Man of Steel, once and for all!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Ajax

1/17/10 10:14am

It's definitely a question of 'dog bits man'.. it's only interesting if exceptional. Who'd want to watch a series of episodes of The Enterprise just flying through space and Spock impassively pushing buttons?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Ajax

1/17/10 10:17am

that was 'dong BITES' man, of course.. I'm not turning into Inspector Clouseau here ('Does your dog bit?'), just a bad typist.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#) Ajax

1/17/10 10:18am

and 'dog' not 'dong'... sheesh!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Chico McDirk](#) Zack Handlen

1/15/10 2:55pm

The Defiant Ones

Shouldn't DS9's ship have been called Defiant II? Or B?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#) Chico McDirk

1/15/10 3:08pm

Not really, Chico McD. In the really real world, ships are often named after famous or noteworthy ships from the past.

The Enterprise in TNG was not called Enterprise-D. It was just Enterprise. The "D" was added to the NCC code. They did this to honor the famous NCC-1701, rather than giving the latest Enterprise the next construction contract code in numerical sequence.



[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 3:11pm

Nice catch! Probably something to do with the Enterprise being the flagship, and thus special, so it keeps its hull number, whereas other, not-so-special ships can be reuse names, but get new hull numbers

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 4:07pm

Constitution was the flagship, I think.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 4:13pm

Constitution was the TOS flagship  
Enterprise was the TNG flagship

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 4:14pm

That, and having the USS Enterprise NCC-70213 just doesn't have the same ring as good ol' 1701.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 4:18pm

Thanks. I assumed they always reused the previous ship's code and just added a letter.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Chico McDirk  
1/15/10 4:56pm

Ouch, y'all are right. Pre-reboot, The big E didn't get made flagship until after the TOS era.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Chico McDirk  
1/16/10 12:33am

I had thought the Enterprise in TOS was one of 12 Constitution Class starships, and didn't think there was an official flagship at that time. The 12 comes from an early episode where Kirk is explaining things to someone from the past, maybe a really early episode where Starfleet is "Space Command." The Constitution Class bit was mentioned in the TNG episode where they got the Naked Time disease. I could be way off.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Chico McDirk  
1/19/10 3:23pm

Kirk tells John Christopher in Tomorrow Is Yesterday that there are only 12 like it, in the fleet.

The Star Fleet Technical Manual (1975) referred to the Enterprise as a "Constitution-class" ship. They had a lot of access to original production stuff, so that may have some from the show's bible or something. The manual also had schematics for a dreadnought.

Yes, I had a copy when was 11 or 12 or 13 or so.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 4:52pm

Those bald fuckers in The Empath ought to be thankful...

...That Star Trek never bothered with continuity. Kirk & Spock could still have their kironine-derived telekinetic powers from Plato's Stepchildren, when The Empath starts. They would have kicked some ass.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
1/15/10 7:49pm

Agreed, esp about the Warp 11 engines from that episode with the Kelvins. Wouldn't the Klingons be surprised...

I'm obsessing on the image of those bald fuckers from The Empath doing the "He's Tweedle Dee / I'm Tweedle Dum" dance.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JimZipCode  
1/16/10 1:02am

I actually didn't see The Empath until I was an adult; when I was a kid I think I probably loved every episode, not looking at them with the same critical eye I would as a teenager and an adult. So I saw The Empath and...it really pissed me off. You, Jim, seem to have the same reaction to it? I mean, Spock's Brain and such is really stupid, but it didn't piss me off.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)JimZipCode  
1/16/10 1:23pm

I remember The Empath distinctly from when I was ten. I think I liked it. Thinking about it now, I can't get past a race that uses torture and murder to judge someone else's morality. I suppose that was the point. I should watch it again before next week.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
1/16/10 4:13pm

Oh yeah. I have that reaction to it.

Not sure if that was the first reaction I had as a kid. I might have been more confused and less pissed, as a kid. I might have \*wanted\* to play along, and wanted to like it. Or maybe not.

[Reply](#)

- [Strictly speaking thats not pe](#)Zack Handlen  
1/16/10 1:01am

The apostrophe that destroyed civilization

"In fact, given it's cavalier attitude towards narrative convenience, it's a film that favors distraction over discussion." That first "it's" should be "its". "It's" is a contraction of "it is"; the possessive ("belonging to it") is "its".

<http://twitter.com/FakeAPSt>...More helpful tips for usage-challenged journalists at (with which I am not affiliated).

There's a direct chain of cause and effect from the decline in correct grammar and punctuation to the rise of Rush Limbaugh and The Hills. In your hearts, you know it's true.

[Reply](#)

- [The Visible Man](#)Strictly speaking thats not pe  
1/16/10 3:37pm

There's a direct chain of cause and effect from the decline in sexual satisfaction you experience to the rise of making nitpicking douchey comments about grammar and punctuation. In your heart, you know it's true.

[Reply](#)

- [Strictly speaking thats not pe](#)Strictly speaking thats not pe  
1/21/10 8:37pm

I know you'd like to believe that, but sadly for you my main squeeze is an honest-to-gawd Latin major (and a black belt); when I out-nerd him at splittin' grammatical hairs it gets him horned up like a mink on speed. Gay jock nerds ruuule! Stercus accidit, muthafucka!

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 12:27pm

Plato's Stepchildren - Yuk

I'm actually kinda surprised at the love for it here. It was yet another in an increasingly long line "captured by superior beings and forced to do weird stuff until our heroes eventually beat them with their street (space?) smarts" episodes.

With yet \*another\* connection to Earth! It's almost as if Erich von Daniken a secret script consultant.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)barefoot jim  
1/15/10 9:56pm

She also did voice rolls in "Assignment: Earth" (Gary Seven's computer, IIRC) and...

"The Tholian Web" (Loskene)

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)barefoot jim  
1/16/10 1:14pm

Err... 'roles'

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
1/16/10 8:46am

Tholian Dregs

Last time I spoke about how little I had seen the episodes in question as a lad, and there was some speculation that much of the third season wasn't shown in some places. Well, I certainly saw these episodes several times and both made a big mark on me.

'Tholian' was one of my faves, McCoy's hand slipping through the body, Kirk fading in and out like my dad's shortwave radio, and those little triangles drawing lines 'Etch a Sketch' indeed! And then the Greek episode? First of all, I love me some dwarfs, especially this gentleman who I'd seen in so many other shows of the epoch (he even beat out Billy Barty in my book (entitled, fittingly, the Short Book of Dwarves, by Richelieu Jr)). Also, and I admit this sheepishly, it is one of the episodes that I found somehow intensely erotic between the ages of 8 and well...

I finally got ahold of one of the 'new version' box sets, unfortunately it was the third season, so the first thing I spun was 'TW'. And I leaned back on the couch ready for some in-and-out, triangular excitement.. and...

Meh...

I was really disappointed (not by the new effects which I found clear, clean and surprisingly true to the original), but by the overall feeling (negative) and structure (as usual, you've got your A and B plots, but they don't really join up or pay off...). Maybe I'd just built it up too much in my mind. I was surprised when I sent back and watched the very earliest episodes by how clear and dynamic the direction seemed. More rane-work than I'd remember, and clear compositions showing what the scene was about (often Kirk and Spock, debating, with Kirk a bit larger in the frame and McCoy floating behind them like a Souther Greek Chorus). Basically your standard, sixties, high-quality professionalism, applicable to Sci-Fi as to a Western or a crime drama...

Here is was just, flat.

Greek World is a bit flat too, but in the sense of it playing out on a stage, which works for me in this instance. I remember as a pretentious adolescent thinking it might have something to do with Greek theatre, and the idea of theatre (notice the 're' spelling. Noblesse oblige.) itself. As a pretentious adult, I now realize that all drama is like this, just not so obviously. Nonetheless, I think the stagey, theatrical aspect plays out well here, as it is about performing/performances, and the idea of staging itself..

All of which is the long way around to saying; Uhura gave me a chubby and I wanted to be forced to kiss her against my will (or to ham it up pretending to resist). C'mon don't leave me hanging here! I can't be the only one who reacted like that! .. Hello? ... Allooooo?

[Reply](#)

- [GraveAbe](#)Zack Handlen  
9/16/14 10:01am

I haven't seen this episode in years, so maybe they dealt with this during the show and I've forgotten, but if they were able to create an injectable kironine concentrate that gives them heightened telekinetic powers, why didn't they manufacture it in bulk once back on the Enterprise? Seems like it could come in handy - inject yourself before beaming down to explore a strange new world.

This sin is still being committed in current iterations of Trek, most recently "Into Darkness" where they were able to synthesize the life restoring properties of Khan's blood. I assume they will never use it again.

[Reply](#)

- [Tales to Enrage](#)Zack Handlen  
1/16/10 4:55am

Plato, you are one messed up guy.

I always enjoyed this episode by viewing the cruelty of these aliens as not being something they had before they met Plato or as a corruption of Plato's philosophy, but something they developed from his systems. After all, the ancient Greeks were biased as hell against anyone who wasn't Greek as well. Of course Parmen doesn't really care what McCoy or Kirk want, he's Greek and they're not! What's wrong with making non-Greeks (and in Alexander's case, someone they judge as "defective") do things they don't want to so they can get their kicks?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/15/10 5:20pm

Spock's humiliation

One subtlety of Spock's reaction after the Tweedle Dee - Tweedle Dum scene, is that when he goes into that trance, he's not specifically retreating from the humiliation. The thing that requires his intense concentration and trance, is the effort to master his ANGER. He's actually more troubled by his (justifiable) rage, than by the humiliation itself. He tells McCoy that McCoy must express it, while Spock must master his.

That's kinda cool.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/10 8:22am

Mr Nit-Pick

Sorry, but I think "...energy web" that, once completely," should be 'once completED'...

This sucks, I go from laughing and nodding my head (very funny meta-stuff, Z) and then I turn into my grammar teacher... I know you guys have to pretty much go over this yourselves, so let's call it an assist so I can sleep at night, OK?

[Reply](#)

- [mister man](#)Zack Handlen

8/18/14 7:46pm

You can only get promoted to a senior staff position once you have demonstrated that you have 24/7 plot armor. One of those redshirts who makes it back alive. This comes in handy in times like "The Tholian Web" when you need to be sure that whoever you leave behind will be there when you come back.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/10 8:47am

Last Nit-Pick: (To the tune of the Clash)

Z, you said: "Things take a turn for the inevitable when Parmen decides he wants to keep McCoy around, and McCoy doesn't want to go".. Shouldn't that be 'stay'?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

1/16/10 8:18am

"It isn't soon after this that Chekov starts showing symptoms of mental disturbance. "

I think you mean that it IS soon after, no?

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/10 1:51pm

Do Lucy and Ricky Ricardo count as tv's first interracial couple? I'm seriously curious.

[Reply](#)

- [Aim and Blast](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/10 8:38pm

She laughs at your little joke

Then you take your reward, Lemon. Then you take your reward

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen

1/15/10 4:58pm

semi-relevant

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

i've watched this too many times.

[Reply](#)

## *Star Trek*: "Wink Of An Eye"/"The Empath"

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 22, 2010

[Comments \(182\)](#)



I take notes when I watch *Trek* episodes for recapping. I do that for every show I watch. I don't spend all that much time directly referring to those notes when I do the actual write-up, but I like having the information there if I need it. There's probably something to be said for the way jotting down plot details, character names, and dialog helps to give me a clearer sense of what each episode is about, making it easier to remember details and create a structure for the review. Whatever the exact reason, I've found that whenever I've tried to put together an essay on a movie or show *without* notes, I get nervous.

I mention this as a way of apologizing for the sketchiness of my comments on "Wink Of An Eye," because, despite the fact that I *know* I had my laptop open and I typed repeatedly throughout the episode, my notes for it have mysteriously vanished. Maybe I deleted them when I opened the file to take notes on "The Empath." Maybe I put them in a different file. Maybe I was hallucinating, because it's been that kind of a week, and I gotta be honest with you, I'm not completely convinced that I'm writing this right now. This could all be some kind of stress dream, and in a moment or two, the letters on the keys will change into some language that cuts my fingers and my monitor will slam down on my hands and eat them. (The only benefit to this being a nightmare is that at least I could be sleeping right now.)

Anyway. "Wink of an Eye," what I remember. Of the two episodes this week, "Eye" is easily the best—not great, but at least it feels like a *Trek* episode, as opposed to "The Empath," which plays like one of those awful hour-long *Twilight Zones*. Responding to a distress call from a planet with no recorded life forms... again... Kirk and co find a beautiful, culturally advanced city that's entirely empty of inhabitants. (The beauty aspect is apparently important, as Scotty mentions it in the supplemental Captain's Log.) (Which is odd. Why is Scotty recording a log? I was under the impression that Kirk was in charge of the Captain's Log, and that other crew members recorded entries only when Kirk wasn't available to do so. Admittedly, Kirk is on the planet when the episode begins, but he hasn't been there that long, and surely the log entry can wait till gets back. Maybe it's that officers each have their own journals, which would make sense, or there's a specific time the Log needs to be recorded each day. But I like to imagine, given James Doohan's well-known animosity towards Shatner, that Scotty is just taking the next step towards attaining complete control of the ship. After all, it's Kirk's fault that the poor *Enterprise* keeps going on all these mechanically damaging adventures.)

It seems like most every episode we've seen in season 3 has had our heroes visiting planets with no discernible life forms, only to be immediately accosted by those life forms upon beaming down. At least "Eye" gives the computer an excuse for its error. The citizens of Scalos (the planet) (thanks, Wikipedia!) are really, really, really fast. So fast that it's impossible to see them in "normal" speed, so fast that when they talk it sounds like a buzzing insect—so fast that they can dodge phaser fire. The accident that Barry Allen-ed everyone also made them sterile, and now a once thriving civilization is down to its last nine members. The distress call that attracted the *Enterprise* is a lure to give the Scalosians a chance at some fresh meat. That's why a red-shirt named Compton disappears on Scalos, and that's why Deela, a Scalosian, drugs Kirk's coffee and winds him up to her level. She likes him. She really, really likes him.

As threats go, the Scalosians aren't bad, although their willingness to give the hero of the show a drug that will make it possible for him to defeat them is a little suspect. They manage to beam aboard the *Enterprise* somehow, which doesn't make a lot of sense, science-wise. If their speed makes them invisible to the computer as life-forms, how would the transporter even work? Especially since they get brought on without anyone on the ship realizing it. Their sabotage of the *Enterprise's* control systems makes clever use of their undetectability (Spock's reversal of that sabotage makes for a cute episode button), and there's something, well, creepy is a stretch, but certainly unsettling about a threat whose presence can only be recognized in the aftermath. (For a better use of this idea, check out the great later series episode of *Dr. Who*, "Blink.") In fact, the ep might've been stronger if it had spent more time focusing on the mystery, and the danger that mystery represented, instead of dropping Kirk down the rabbit hole and spoiling the question so early on.

Once Kirk crosses over, though, the situation progresses as expected. Deela is hot for him, the leader of the Scalosians, who is also into Deela, is less fond. The actor who plays the latter, Jason Evers, was also the lead of the wacky, "My wife's a head I've got in the basement, who can I kill so I can have some sex again?" b-flick, *The Brain That Wouldn't Die*. (*Brain* was used in a great *MST3K* episode, as well as source material for feminist graduate students searching for thesis topics.) Evers' performance in "Eye" can best be described as "perfunctory," and apart from Deela, none of the other Scalosians make any impression at all. We have our main danger, a machine that's screwing with the life support system, and we have our obstacles, and then it's just a matter of Kirk and eventually Spock teaming up to fix things. (We even have McCoy coming up with a magical cure for the super speed.)

But like I said, it wasn't horrible. The hook is clever, if undercooked, and I did get a kick out of Spock following in Kirk's footsteps without hesitating, and Kirk, in turn, reacting to his arrival as if it was an entirely expected turn of events. I'd label this as "functional." The triangle between Deela, Kirk, and Evers is a familiar one, and given such a rich main concept, it's a shame that there wasn't more an attempt made to take advantage of the possibilities. There are hints: Compton, the red-shirt, dies of "cellular damage," which apparently the newly turned are vulnerable to, but once this is raised, it's quickly dropped. It's not like Kirk is going to die, after all, though it's surprising the Scalosians don't get some kind of comeuppance for all the kidnapping and manslaughter they're responsible for. (They explain that when their numbers began to drop, they created the distress signal to attract new blood, but the super-speed transition tends to kill weaker, non-Kirk humanoids.)

In a stronger season, "Eye" would've been a low spot, a perfunctory by-the-numbers programmer which, while not embarrassing, wouldn't have made much of an impression. Here, it reminds us that, for a while anyway, competency was the least we could hope to expect from the series. "The Empath" is a sad reminder of *Trek's* slow sink into mediocrity, an ep with a lazy, random script, a set that would've made more sense on *Lost In Space*, and a leading lady that tests the patience of even the most loyal of the show's fans. It's not as outright embarrassing as some of the stories we've seen in the past, and it definitely has some weirdly effective moments, but it's indicative of the general trend towards sloppy, ill-formed plotting that ruined one of the series' greatest strengths. At least in the first two seasons, when stupid things were happening, they nearly always happened *fast*.

Another solar system, another star about to go nova, and the *Enterprise* on a rescue mission to contact some guys in a science observatory. These guys turn up dead, which is probably for the best, because the security camera footage of them that Kirk, Spock, and McCoy see reveals a cranky dude and a religious dude, neither of whom we'll miss. In the footage, after a two line dialog that instantly defines their stereotype, both characters vanish (there's a weird, quilted screen effect when they disappear, too, which I guess indicates a rift in time or space, but mostly makes me think somebody rammed the camera lens into the kitchen table at my grandma's). Our heroes express consternation over the disappearance, then Spock blinks out, followed by McCoy, and finally, after the expected ration of hammy-acting, Kirk.



They wake up in a big dark room that, according to Spock, is "121.32 meters below the planet's surface." Really, though, it's just a lot space and shadows and the occasional prop. "Spectre of the Gun" could get away with this minimalism because it had just enough trappings to suggest a place. The empty bits made that suggestion more sinister and eerie. Here, there's no sense of anything. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy walk around, then they find a mute woman on a platform, then they run into tall bald men with special remote controls, and then there's a lab. Why would you conduct so much science in a place where you can't see anything?

Of course, this is less "science" than a morality play—the aliens, called Vians, are running an experiment to see if the Empath has developed the proper emotional, physical, and ethical requirements to justify the survival of her race. So, again with the *TZ* vibe. As godlike beings, the Vians are strictly second-tier. They start off sadistic and terrifying, but we're supposed to be sympathetic towards them by the end, somehow, despite the fact that they murdered the Grumpy and Godly. Or maybe not sympathetic, but at least not actively evil. Kirk manages to psyche them out with a "You're no better than us!" speech, which somehow makes it acceptable that they killed the other men and tortured McCoy. I think.

I really didn't care for this. The story is cheesy, 3am profound junk. We've been down the road of the aliens who test other aliens for worthiness, we've had some laughs with it (Space lizard!), we don't really need to be reminded how noble everybody is. Plus, the constant return to the archetype isn't good for world-building. The universe can't be *this* full up of these guys, can it? Take the monolith in *2001*. It's a striking, powerful image—a stark reminder of how little we know about everything, how barely we've cracked the possibilities that life and the cosmos have to offer, how rich with potential we, as a species, still are. Now, imagine that every planet we went to had a monolith. Sometimes more than one, many of them in different colors, or different shapes, and some of them told knock knock jokes. How quickly would the magic die? And how fast before you start assuming that the whole galaxy is a poorly planned MMORPG that you forgot you were playing?

What really kills "The Empath," though, is the title character. McCoy calls her Gem, which is as ridiculous as it sounds. (Truly ridiculous? Truly, truly, truly ridiculous?)(Yes.) The actress, Kathryn Hays, is, um, awful. Just—awful. She doesn't say anything, and her facial expression never really changes, but she performs these utterly bizarre and inorganic gestures to communicate that I guess are supposed to indicate her deep emotional connection to the world, but really just scream "Bad senior dance thesis." This would be lousy enough, but the script goes out of its way to praise her beauty, her worth, her quality of character. It's interminable. The episode needs Gem (snicker) to be fascinating, and when she's just a mediocre actress that (I'm guessing) Rodenberry wanted to, ahem, feel up (ha!), the already weak writing falls apart completely.

There are a couple of decent bits. The sight of Grumpy and Godly in their jars is funny/disturbing, and the torture of Kirk and McCoy is presented in such an odd fashion as to make it distinctive. This might just be the warmest we've ever seen Spock and McCoy behave towards one another; McCoy, near death, tells Spock he has "a good bedside manner" in a non-sarcastic way, and Spock even calls McCoy a "friend." Plus, the basic, baffling absurdity of the story is enough to hold your interest at least for a little while. But overall, "Empath" is a wash.

#### Grades:

"Wink Of An Eye": B-

"The Empath": C-

#### Stray Observations:

- I've got nada for quotes this week.
- Okay, one: "Their own imperfections killed them." See, now I'm imagining *Saw 6: In Space*, and I'm not sure how I feel about that.
- Next week, I will keep better track of "Elaan of Torgus" and "Whom Gods Destroy."
- Oh, and for those of you who have been asking for *Star Trek: The Next Generation* coverage (and even for those of you who *haven't* been asking, I guess), it's official: once I've finished up the third season of original *Trek*, I'll be digging into *Next Gen*, S1. I'm very excited about this, despite having already watched all of *Next Gen*, S1.



## DISCUSSION

- Community (181)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:15am

The second season of TNG  
is far better than the first. Best of luck to you on surviving, for instance, Angel One.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 11:17am

Oh.

I agree. Angel One, Lonely Among Us, Haven, Code of Honor...

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 11:21am

The Last Outpost, Justice, The Battle, Too Short A Season, When The Bough Breaks...ugh. Rough seas ahead.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 11:49am

@St. God

Thank you for making this dreary world even a little bit better

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 11:53am

Remember Zack's comment to start the review of Spock's Brain? Imagine you've done your letter writing campaign, you've saved your show. Now you're sitting down to watch the first episode, and you can't wait. THIS IS GONNA BE AWESOME! And then you get — Spock's Brain.

This is how I felt when season 1 of TNG aired in 1987. It was during my college years: I had just moved out of my parents house, was living with 2 buddies from high school. I made it clear the TV wasn't going to be tuned to anything else when Star Trek finally returned to the air. I could not wait: THIS IS GONNA BE AWESOME! So all three of us were sitting around the TV. And then we got - 8 stiff sitting around a Ramada Inn lobby, being all in touch with their feelings.

Are you fucking kidding me?

Never mind how the awful waste of John M Ford's brilliant ideas about Klingons. Never mind Spock split into three different characters: a stoic alien, an emotionless robot science officer, a telepath.

I never made it thru all of season 1. I think I lasted a shorter period of time than Tasha Yar did. Such a crushing disappointment. And I never, ever gave it another chance. To this day I have to fight an urge to sneer whenever I see one of those actors, except for Patrick Stewart and Kunta Kinte.

Maybe a review of the series will nudge me toward giving it a shot. I hear it turned decent in season 3.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:02pm

The first season of TNG is dreadful. Not as dreadful as S3 of TOS, but dreadful nevertheless.

After that though, things pick up considerably. So if you continue to do these at a clip of two per week, you should be able to give another "A" grade sometime this summer!!

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:07pm

If The Measure of a Man doesn't warrant an A, that's crap.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:13pm

"8 stiffs sitting around a Ramada Inn lobby, being all in touch with their feelings." That's awesome. (The episode "The Royale" - a bit of a knockoff from "Spectre of the Gun" - is literally that, almost.)

The Next Generation did get better, though it was almost always rather bland, but the first season was just bad. I remember seeing "Code of Honor" and...just, wow. I remember Frakes (who seems like he's a blast) saying "Code" was one of the biggest pieces of shit he was ever involved in. I started rewatching some of them recently and got to "Lonely Among Us", and it was just really fucking stupid. I went no further.

To echo your story, Jim, I grew up on reruns of classic Trek I was 6 or 7 when TNG started. I remember seeing the commercials counting down to the start date and being so excited. The pilot wasn't great but I coasted in on excitement. "Where No One Has Gone Before" was at least entertaining and not horrible. But about midway through the season, my 7-year-old self went back to watching reruns of classic Trek. I picked back up maybe mid-season 2 and it was still not great but it got better. Except for that clip show abomination.

Has any show had as bad a first season as TNG? "Datalore," "We'll Always Have Paris," "Skin of Evil"... I know it takes time for new series' to pick up, but god almighty.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:29pm

The only good thing about "The Royale" is that "Time Squared" comes next. That ep owns.

TNG gets really, really, good in S3. "Yesterday's Enterprise" was as good as Trek got. Until TBOBW.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:30pm

Skin of Evil was pretty damn horrible, I can remember knowing that way back when it aired and I had all the wisdom of a nerdy ten year old. But Datalore was pretty fun, IMO. I take great glee in seeing Brent Spiner singing the Potatoe / Potahto song and exclaiming I learned to communicate with the Crystalline Entity!

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 12:42pm

The Best of Both Worlds still ranks as one of the best cliffhangers in my humble nerd opinion. It's too bad the Borg were overused in Voyager- they lost their teeth.

[Reply](#)

- [Derek Martz](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 12:55pm

I loved TNG's first season. Granted, I was 8, and it was my first real exposure to sci-fi, and I probably liked the IDEA of space more than the shows themselves. Season 2 changed my mind, and I realized that season 1 was absolutely terrible. Not a fan of Dr. Pulaski, though.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 1:18pm

I think The Naked Now ranks as the biggest, steamiest pile that TNG unloaded. For crying out loud, Data gets drunk and does slapstick.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 1:27pm

^ That's still a loot better than Data doing stand-up sober in The Outrageous Okona, which may be the only object in the universe less funny than Jay Leno.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 1:54pm

I will still stand by "Conspiracy," Fermat's Last Slip-up aside. It was like they hadn't figured exactly what direction they wanted the show to go in, so they figured they'd try this crazy infiltrating aliens plot- think Star Trek trying to be the X-Files, before the X-Files existed. It gave the heebie jeebies when I was a kid, but I loved it then and still do.

If you can't wait to make fun of "Code of Honor," try this on:  
<http://www.tvsquad.com/2008...>

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 2:02pm

No show not named Star Trek would have made it out of its first season with episodes like that. Except Bab5, but they managed it by utilizing TNG hate.

/liked B5

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 3:54pm

Agreed on "Conspiracy", Jimmy. That was the hint that TNG could actually eventually be worthwhile, the rest of S1 to the contrary.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 4:12pm

Conspiracy also concludes TNG's first proper story arc IIRC. I think a few episodes earlier, someone warned Picard that something was rotten in Starfleet. I thought I heard that the weird mouth bugs were supposed to be Borg advance troops also.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 4:51pm

The Best of Both Worlds is definitely one of the best of TNG Trek, but I also loved that episode that introduced them in the first place. I can't remember what it was called, but it's when Q teleported the Enterprise into Borg Territory, Guinan gets a terrible feeling about everything, and Picard suddenly realizes he's facing an enemy that cannot be defeated. (The Borg just keep regenerating their ship after every attack, and no attack ever succeeds twice in a row.) To which Picard has to admit defeat, and Q takes 'em back home. It was chilling; there was an enemy out there, and there was no way to stop it. You could only run away, and only with the help of a godlike deity.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 5:08pm

"Q Who?"

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 5:27pm

Curious that Picard never calls Q out for that on any of their subsequent meetings, especially considering that the Borg wind up mutilating his body, subverting his mind, and killing thousands of his colleagues with it.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 5:28pm

Conspiracy also has SFX apparently borrowed from Scanners.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 5:30pm

JammerJim: I've finally yielded to the ravings of all the B5 fanboys I know and am giving the series a try on DVD. I'm about 2/3 of the way through Season 1, and gosh if it doesn't look like a cheesily-sfx'd, woodenly-acted, hokily-written ersatz DS9.

Seriously, there's not one single area in which DS9 doesn't outshine it. That said, it's not \*bad\*, and it has picked up some steam after the halfway point. But I can't imagine why there are geeks out there who would've said to themselves, "You know why DS9 sucks? They never had an episode centering around a transit strike! God bless B5!"

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 5:40pm

Seasons 3 and 4 of B5 are the two fastest seasons of sci-fi I've ever seen. The momentum is incredible. The special effects and core cast do improve considerably, though the guest stars are and always will be spotty.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 6:07pm

Watching the early-CGI effects on B5 almost literally makes my brain stem ache.

I can almost always put up with rudimentary/primitive/cheap SFX in pretty much every other form, and often criticize others when they can't get past cheap model work or stop-motion, so I feel a bit hypocritical about this, but that old video toaster shit on B5 just about makes me start rubbing at my eyes in nearly-physical irritation.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 8:04pm

Oooh, Ajax, the B5 fanboys would eat you alive for saying it looks like a bad version of DS9! A lot of people think Paramount took the idea for B5 (the creator apparently pitched it to them) and made DS9. It's a long story I'll not bother with.

Anyway, you should hang in there. B5 picks up steam as season two progresses, and as others have said seasons three and four are very good. I'd stop there, though. It was supposed to have a 5-year arc, but it looked like season 4 was going to be the last, so they compressed the story down to end it (which hurt the story, but it was still good). Then they got a fifth season anyway, and it suffered from being tacked on.

I also liked DS9 a lot. It too, had its growing pains, but nothing as bad as the start of B5 or TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Bad Horse

1/22/10 11:47pm

Conspiracy was an awesome TNG episode. It doesn't hold up well today, but for it's time, it was super cool and violent.

[Reply](#)

- [Hornacek](#)Bad Horse

1/23/10 6:25pm

BadHorse, Janeway called Q out on that. It may have been his first Voyager episode, can't remember, but Janeway is listing reasons why she shouldn't trust Q, or things that he's done to Starfleet that are bad, and she says "Oh, and you introduced us to the Borg, thank you very much."

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bad Horse

1/24/10 12:04am

I do believe that was Q's first Voyager episode. I did not like Voyager whatsoever, but I remember the Q episodes being fun. The one with the guy who wants to be allowed to die, that was Voyager, right? I remember that one being particularly great.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Bad Horse

1/24/10 9:07pm

"The Royale" is underrated. Notice that I didn't say "wonderful," just "underrated." They should've written a more prominent part for Noble Willingham (1931-2004); with a shift in the episode's emphasis, he could've almost been for "Royale" what William Windom was for "Doomsday Machine."

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Zack Handlen

1/22/10 11:52am

Handlen

When you run out of TOS would you consider continuing this column? Maybe doing the remaining movies or attempting TNG. I don't think anyone would hold it against you if you wanted to skip most of the first season. I don't know if anyone could top Wil Wheaton's write-ups. Maybe even do the animated continuation of TOS?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 11:59am

Yes! The animated series!

I haven't seen that in 30 years. I think we'd all like to know whether it really is good, or not. And it's probably justified: "canon" or not, it really was a televised Star Trek series, 14 years before TNG.

Besides, everyone should see (and read about) Yesteryear.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 12:00pm

I'm not sure if you're joking or not, but if you aren't, check out the last "Stray Observation." I'll be doing this for a while longer.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 12:10pm

Tasha Robinson reviewed the Animated Series some time ago and I believe she gave it a B+.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 12:15pm

Perhaps next time I will read the stray observations before I comment. Perhaps. Still about the movies?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 12:20pm

I plan on finishing the original cast movies as a caper for the third season—we'll hit Star Trek V and VI before moving on to ST:TNG. Give everybody a nice sense of closure.

No plans to do the animated series. I've watched five or six episodes and found them painfully dry.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 12:22pm

He mentioned there that he would be doing TNG. I don't know if the animated series should get its own column...maybe a one-shot review of the animated series as a whole.

And I agree re: Wil Wheaton's write-ups. They are hilarious and also have some great behind the scenes anecdotes and observations. His story of meeting Lawrence Tierny is great.

Glad to hear you'll be doing more write-ups, Zach. Your TOS reviews have been mint.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 12:31pm

"we'll hit Star Trek V"

Comment thread for that will be epic.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 12:37pm

Zach, have you seen any other TNG besides S1? I would love to hear a fresh reaction to certain cliffhangers, particularly those taking place roughly midway through the series.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 12:44pm

I'm a devoted Trek fan, but even I have never bought ST V. Even with Okuda's wonderful pop up text, I don't think I could stand it.

[Reply](#)

- [Derek Martz](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 12:57pm

There's always Rifftrax. That deadens the pain.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 1:00pm

Re: "Painfully dry"

Even from my childhood, I remember them as being very static, and very talky. But there a couple of very good ones.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 1:06pm

Wing - I refuse to even acknowledge the existence of V.

Wait a minute, what the hell are you talking about? There never was a Star Trek V. I thought they just took an extended break between TVH and TUC because Shatner and Doohan required breathroughs in hairpiece and girdle technology before filming again.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 1:21pm

@Bad Horse: I've seen quite a few Next Gen, including the cliffhangers I imagine you're referring to. Looking forward to revisiting them.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 1:47pm

Star Trek V is by no stretch of the imagination a good movie, but it's not the worst ST movie there is. That would be Insurrection. STV has a few good scenes and decent filmmaking. Insurrection has a plot so stupid as to make The Phantom Menace look like Citizen Kane, plus sloppy filmmaking.

<http://culturedetritus.blog...> I make the detailed case here:

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 1:58pm

<http://www.stardestroyer.net...> Well argued, Eponymous, but Nemesis is still much worse. It's completely illogical, more so than Insurrection, and beat-fot-beat is way too close to The Wrath of Khan for comfort. Plus, this cracks me up every single time -

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 4:03pm

I respectfully disagree with Eponymous and Bad Horse. Neither of the (admittedly awful) TNG movies treat the characters with the same contempt that the alleged Star Trek V ladles on anyone who isn't Kirk. Nemesis and Insurrection were basically lousy extended TV episodes. STV was big-budget Kirk fanfic.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 4:43pm

I won't really defend V, but I did think, when skipping through it not to long ago, that is is probably the movie that is, out of the original cast films, most like a TOS episode. In plot, of course. The story, if you cut it down to 51 minutes, would just be a good TOS episode really. And there are some good moments in that movie. They are just tasty peanuts embedded in a big brown steamer.

V isn't the worst Trek film, though. Nemesis and Insurrection, as mentioned above, beat it in my opinion. Also, do you all think Generations is better than V? I'm not so sure.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 5:51pm

Generations is most certainly better than V. For one thing, V's special effects are worse than what was being done on TNG at the time - when your big-budget movie is getting its ass kicked visually by TV, you're in big trouble. Second, in Generations the characters are at least consistent with the way they were established on the series. Scotty knocking himself out on a bulkhead? With a ridiculous slapstick clang? Come on.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 7:00pm

I liked V. I even liked the ending. Why does God need a starship?

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/22/10 7:27pm

@Bad Horse: You make a compelling case. I still think that the central premise of Nemesis was more credible than the central premise of Insurrection, but they're both incredibly bad.

[Reply](#)



- [Richelieu Jr](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 11:45pm

V throws out everything we know about Spock, has the characters speaking subtext that was so nicely left unsaid in the series, and fucking fart jokes, for chrissakes!

Thart said, partys work for me as almost Beckett-like absurdity.

The beginning with the bald guy in the field of smoking holes and Vulcan bro rides up on a space-camel and says basically 'You would kill me, man you do not know,, for a field of empty holes?' and the cast says, 'It is all I have!'

It's like in 'Waiting for Goddot' where he says:

'I can't go on like this'

and the response:

'That's what you think!'

(that, buyt he way, is my reaction to the whole movie.)

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Nerd Paragon

1/22/10 11:50pm

Nemesis was just disappointing. I thought that a good story was there, it just wasn't told well.

[Reply](#)

- [jonnieboy](#)Nerd Paragon

1/23/10 5:41pm

Good, the movies! I'm always happy to revisit the movies! In theory, if not in practice...I'm sure you know what I mean.

You know...you wouldn't be out of place to end the entire original character stories with Star Trek, the most recent movie. I'm kind of surprised no one's mentioned it. Maybe not, though.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Nerd Paragon

1/23/10 6:12pm

Maybe because he's already reviewed the new Star Trek movie in this series, jonnieboy. (Check out his dual review of the new movie with "The Motion Picture.")

[Reply](#)

- [jonnieboy](#)Nerd Paragon

1/23/10 7:30pm

Dang, time flies! I actually must have missed that - thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Nerd Paragon

1/23/10 11:50pm

Among my Star Trek fan friends, the thing that pisses us off the most about V is the fact that it fucked our characters. I mean, didn't only throw out so much about these characters but painted them in increasingly ludicrous and perhaps insulting ways (except, if I remember correctly, Kirk...which makes sense since The Shat directed it).

That being said, like I said above: There are some good moments in the movie. Is it worth it to endure the whole thing for that? Probably not. But like I said, I really think if you edited down the movie to episode length, it might be a passable episode of Trek. There are some great moments between the triumvirate (except perhaps the "marshmallons" moment), and I have to admit, the part where we see

McCoy's father die is affecting, and Kelley plays it extremely well (though I'd say this movie took his grumpy persona way, way too far, as they played up to the point of caricature other characters as well). "I've always known, I'll die alone", "If we are, then life is a dream", etc... Those moments aren't horrible.

What separates this movie's attempts at comedic departure from IV's comedic attempts is that IV, while I think most of us agreed in that threat was not a great movie, at least didn't fuck our characters. In fact, if I think about it (and I'd need to watch it again), it held to them pretty well.

We'll only have to cut and paste out comments from here to the thread Handlen gives us on V.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/23/10 11:51pm

\*thread

[Reply](#)

- [jonnieboy](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/25/10 6:35pm

So true, St God - I recently rewatched this one (I was watching all of them in order, with a friend). I must have completely blocked out the flirtation between Uhura and Scotty. What the hell????

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:15am

TNG writeups

Hey, awesome! Considering that TNG had such a long run, that suggests we can keep on Trekkin' well into the early 2010s, even at two eps a week with pauses to make room for other geekery.

Why am I so excited? Not only do I love Trek, but these have been some of my favorite comment threads at the A.V. Club. This comment, for example, is top-notch.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 11:50am

I'm excited too! Incidentally, we were flipping the channels the other day, and we came across a S1 episode of Star Trek: TNG. They were doing a scene with people on some far off alien colony (non-alien, just human). Until they showed Wesley Crusher on screen, we were convinced that it was some late 80's family drama (like Wonder Years). It turns out that the future fashions are very, very out of date now ... kind of like how TOS reeks of the 60's. It's just kinda weird noticing this in hindsight.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 12:01pm

This is good news. I was considering buying TNG on DVD and now I have a pretty good reason to, although the first two seasons are pretty awful.

Zack you realize this will have some of us clamoring for DS9 write-ups, right?

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 12:08pm

We can only hope.

Like all Star Treks (except maybe TOS), DS9's first season was the weakest. But there were a handful of first-rate episodes (Emissary, Progress, Duet, In The Hands of the Prophets) in there. Much better than TNG's rather abysmal first season, in any event.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 12:15pm

Duet is tremendous. And yes, there should be DS9 writeups, starting midway through S6 of TNG so they run in parallel.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 12:19pm

Thanks Zach!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 12:24pm

And along the way, maybe we could branch off into some of the remaining movies? I just got The Undiscovered Country on Blu-ray and I'm loving the original, non-Scooby doo ending (although it's still disturbing when Spock gets all rapey with Valeris when he could've just called Sulu to begin with).

[Reply](#)

- [Dr. O Blivion](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 1:26pm

To be fair to Wil Wheaton, the episode 'The First Duty' remains one of my favorites. (The one where Wesley and fellow academy cadets attempt to cover up their role in the death of a classmate.)

The one and the one where Wes, Picard and the Grumpy Mining Shuttle guy crash land on the desert planet is also pretty good.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 2:00pm

Rarely has young actor been as seriously hosed over as Wheaton was in terms of material. He was Rodenberry's Mary Sue and it showed. And his S1 write-ups are to die for. Too bad that project ended, I thought they were brilliant.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 2:06pm

John B's in!

[Reply](#)

- [Strictly speaking thats not pe](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 6:24pm

<http://www.wilwheatonbooks...@JammerJim> — You're in luck; Wil Wheaton is still cranking out his TNG reminiscences, but in convenient take-along book form: Volume Two wraps up the rest of TNG Season 1. No word on whether he'll go all the way to "Journey's End," Wesley's last appearance in the TV series.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 6:45pm

It got better though. In the tradition of Mirror Mirror, Riker's beard was momentous.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 8:06pm

@Strictly speaking — Thanks for the heads up! I shall do my happy dance now.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 11:25pm

I held a party at my house to watch the first episode of TNG and was so disappointed I didn't go back for over a decade. First Contact brought me back, and I liked some episodes.

I've picked up the complete DVD set and am currently working my way through chronologically.. My god are the first two season a long haul!.. Though the pilot has grown on me, there are probably only 2 or 3 decent episodes the whole time and some (I'm looking at you 'Naked Now' are just fucking painful..

That said, the third season's picking up and I've just had a run of strong, well-wriotten and acted episodes ('Yesterday's Enterprise', for one)

I am very much looking forward to going through them with you all; I just hope Zach doesn't get discouraged because it'll start with a long, long slog...

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 11:45pm

Richelieu, all of the Star Trek series take 3.5 season to find their groove.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax  
1/23/10 10:47am

First Contact was on last night, before Caprica. it still holds up fairly well, in my opinion, though the pacing is a little off.

I think DS9 was fairly good from the beginning. It has the best pilot of all the Trek series.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Ajax  
1/24/10 12:05am

The original Trek would have to be exempted from that rule; the first season of TOS is pretty great. Certainly better than the third.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
1/24/10 8:44am

Right you are, CF Amick...

Except for TOS, natch!

That's one of the reasons I think Enterprise gets too much guff. Cut off TNG after the first 4 seasons and see what you think of it overall.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Ajax  
1/25/10 12:06pm

Season 3 of Enterprise is amazing. It serves as a metaphor for 9/11, this time with all of earth at stake. Archer and crew pull no punches and sometimes do the "wrong" thing to get the results they want. We haven't seen that kind of ambiguity in Star Trek before.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Ajax  
1/25/10 3:00pm

"We haven't seen that kind of ambiguity in Star Trek before. "

Yes we have. See "In The Pale Moonlight" from DS9.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
1/25/10 3:31pm

Still, I'm with CFA.. It tried for something and managed a sustained tension that was quite invigorating, at least for this Trek fan...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 12:25pm

Season 1 of TNG  
(shudders)

S1 has two good things: Picard talking smicky-smack to Argas, and Commander Remmick's head exploding (even if the effects on it blow). Outside of that? Lots of Wesley, lots of Troi talking, lots of bad acting, lots of boring aliens, blech.

"Conspiracy" deserves the A it'll get, but other than that, we'll be in D+/C- country for a while.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 1:50pm

Encounter at Farpoint isn't bad or anything, that's probably a B show. But it is the worst Star Trek series intro (aside from Enterprise's, which barely even counts).

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 2:19pm

Most of Season 1 was bad. I agree with the poster above who said that if it hadn't had Star Trek in the title, it wouldn't have been picked up for a second season. I remember one ep in particular with a giant face in space, messing with the ship.

But, oh, how the show picked up in seasons 2 - 4!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 2:56pm

Conspiracy deserved a follow-up. Those crawly body-snatcher things freaked my 10-year-old self way the hell out.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 4:07pm

The joy of doing TNG will be watching the series find its identity and hit the groove in S3, as opposed to watching TOS go down the toilet in S3.

Of course, TNG eventually goes downhill as well, but not quite so fast.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 4:10pm

"Skin of Evil" wasn't bad, relatively speaking. (If only relative to S1.) Someone above mentioned the lack of "TOS feel" to TNG, and I think this one is very much in the spirit of original Trek.

The funeral denouement is a bit hokey, but even though Yar's death was simply the actor leaving, rather than a true creative decision, having a series regular die still gave some heft to the idea that the creature was pure evil.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 4:33pm

I think the "giant face messing with the ship" is in season 2. And I liked that one somewhat. That's the one I think where the creature is fascinated with death, and we get some interesting discussions. Also, that's one where the creature keeps sending fake ships at them, and Worf and Riker beam over to it and it's really fucked up. I remember enjoying the weirdness of it. The face itself was corny though.

Wasn't Conspiracy supposed to be the start of something more, maybe even the prequel to the Borg? As in, at the end of the episode, some signal is sent out and someone was supposed to come looking? I'm not sure if I remember that right. I just remember the eating the worms thing freaked me out as a 7 year old.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 5:34pm

yeah, that was the original idea. And the Borg were going to be insectile. Personally, I think the way the ended up going with the Borg was much better

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 7:10pm

@St. God: Correct. "Where Silence Has Lease".

Any fans of 11010110, or whatever it's called?

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 10:27pm

You all are forgetting "Arsenal of Freedom," featuring the late, great Vince Schiabelli. And Laforge in command!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 10:28pm

I just watched 11010010 (or whatever) a couple of days ago, and it sucks. at one point Picard leaves the Bridge to Wesley! The fucking Bridge! Of a fucking Flagship! To a fucking 16 year old!\* How could they not find someone more qualified? was the fucking janitor too goddamn busy or what?

and the cheesy holo-slut was terrible. Riker falling in love with her so quickly really stretches the credulity of the episode. The binars were a neat idea though, suitably weird and a bit creepy.

\*at the time I'm sure I loved that. The fact that they had a kid flying the ship was simply mind-blowingly awesome when I was ten. I'm sure we'll have plenty of pro/con Wesley arguments when the time comes

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 10:28pm

Ugh. Shiabelli=Schivalli

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 11:41pm

Hear hear, Mr. Green.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)D.N. Nation  
1/22/10 11:49pm

Yeah, the whole holo-deck seduction was more than icky, and really made you question Riker's sanity and fitness for command.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
1/23/10 11:18am

Worse yet, holo-slut becomes a plot point on at least 2 occasions that imply that she is Riker's true love.

[Reply](#)

- [humanist](#)D.N. Nation  
1/23/10 4:44pm

didn't picard leave the bridge to wesley while they were parked in space dock? i think that's totally acceptable procedure, since star fleet had no reason to mistrust the bynars.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)D.N. Nation  
1/23/10 10:44pm

True, they were in spacedock, so I guess it wasn't as bad as if they were, say, fighting some Romulans. But it's still pretty egregious.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)D.N. Nation  
1/24/10 12:09am

Yeah, 11001001 was lame. I remember in another episode much later, some alien constructs a fake reality for Riker in which the holographic chick was his wife; this is what points out to him that it is a fake reality. But I remember thinking how weird that was - it came from his memory, but why her and not Troi? Or any of the other number of chicks Riker fell for? It would seem to imply that she was his #1, which is sort of dumb. Though I do remember turning on Law & Order years later and seeing Minuet.

I don't remember, by why couldn't those androgynous aliens just ask the Enterprise for help?

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)D.N. Nation

1/28/10 1:59pm

If you mean the Binars, because of their binary thinking, there was a 50/50 chance Starfleet would have said "no." They didn't want to stake their civilization on a coin flip.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

1/22/10 11:22am

Stinkers

These were stinkers for the most part. Wink of an Eye, though, is at least fun. I love the Batman angles. Also, I love how it was made obvious that Kirk had sex with the hot chick. I mean, there's probably been slight implications in other episodes (none come to mind immediately), but I seem to recall this episode being rather obvious, much more blatantly so than any other episode. I mean, they cut to a scene showing Kirk putting his shoes back on and the chick fixing her hair. "Deela...the enemy."

The Empath...I just remember not liking it at all. These were both I guess "bottle episodes" in that they didn't require a lot of sets. Even so, Empath just isn't that great. I seem to recall the novelization of it being far superior (it has been years though). Did any other of you hardcore geeks read the novelizations? Is it just me or were they often a bit better?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God

1/22/10 12:29pm

So how many Pico-seconds do we think Kirk lasted in bed?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

1/22/10 12:31pm

I read the James Blish novelizations. Story-izations? Novellette-izations? As I remember, they weren't book length. Maybe ~4 or 5 to a book? Some of them were pretty good. He also did Spock Must Die!

John M Ford's very awesome 1984 book has a dedication in the front: "To JB. After [?] years, the genuine article." I have always wondered if JB was Blish, and what that meant. Genuine Klingons? A genuine novel?

(Probably nothing at all like that.)

I \*really\* enjoyed the Alan Dean Foster novelizations of the Animated series, as a kid. The Star Trek Logs series. Those were book length: so they were huge expansions of the half hour TAS scripts. Loved 'em. Have no idea now if they were actually good, or I was just really young.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)



- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God

1/22/10 12:33pm

Oh and I read the Blish novelizations. I still remember checking them out of the elementary school library, and then reporting for my weekly wedgies.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God

1/22/10 1:59pm

I still have some of the Blish novelizations somewhere (along with my Star Trek choose-your-own-adventure book! I can't get enough of that). There were usually 3 or 4 to a book I believe. I just remember them being good.

Spock Must Die! was pretty great, if I remember. Some of the old Trek books were great. I remember World Without End, something Phoenix...

I dug up a few of the old Pocket ones too when I was at my folks house for the holidays. How Much For Just the Planet? and Triangle, I believe. The books were often a hell of a lot better than the shows/movies. I've got to track down that Klingon book you keep going on about, Jim.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

1/22/10 3:50pm

RE: "something Phoenix"

Price of the Phoenix, by Sondra Marshak and Myrna Colbreath. And sequel Fate of the Phoenix. I read the covers off those two books, esp the first one. One hell of a Star Trek bad guy, Omne, who develops a way to cheat death.

Thinking back, there was a wicked strong homoerotic streak thru those books, esp "Price". A chapter of slash fiction wouldn't be at all out of place.

From that same mid-70s era, there was a paperback of fan fiction released, Star Trek: The New Voyages. I remember a couple of decent stories in that book, and one excellent one, "Mind-Sifter", which was last in the book.

RE: "How Much For Just the Planet? ... I've got to track down that Klingon book you keep going on about, Jim."

How Much For Just The Planet was Ford's 2nd Klingon book. Evidently Paramount rejected the sequel he wanted to write, so he wrote a musical comedy instead. I've never read a book that was a musical comedy, before or since.

The one I keep going on about is this one:

<http://www.amazon.com/Final...>

<http://www.amazon.com/Final...>

Used copies for 38 cents. Same author.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God

1/22/10 3:57pm

The Blish versions were more like 10 or 12 to a book, and those were slim books. Whereas Foster's Star Trek logs start off 3 to a book (turning a 30 minute episode into a novella) and end up being full-

fledged novels by the end. I haven't re-read them in... decades... but they were way better than the Blish versions of TOS.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)St. God

1/22/10 7:38pm

I'm apparently just a total moosh, but I didn't HATE Empath. Yes, she has a mime-vibe that IS just annoying, but OK, it wasn't as bad as Kirok. I hated the plot hole, though. How did she learn empathy so fast, OR didn't she already have it? Just seemed cheesy.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God

1/22/10 11:32pm

Liked Spock Must Die( wasn't there some unzipping and Vulcan sex in there?) and even as a kid foudn the Blish episode-stories pretty bland...

I must make the obligatory mention of the fact hat I have a copy of Vulcan's Glory that Ms DC Fontana herself dedicated to l'il ol' moi!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)St. God

1/23/10 10:03am

I have some special memories of Empath.

When I was a kid, we only had a black & white set. Empath was the first Star Trek episode I saw in full colour at a friend's house. I was probably about eight at the time.

The stark set with the bright colours still pops in my mind - a holy fuck moment in which I realized an entirely new dimension to the show.

But other than that, yeah a pretty weak episode.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God

1/24/10 12:02am

Yeah, I remember at least thinking the set of The Empath being kind of cool visually. And as said above, the colors, along with the starkness of the set, I found neat as a kid. It still doesn't bother me now. But I'd say the episode itself is worse, in my opinion, than The Way to Eden and Spock's Brain.

If I do remember correctly, there is some implied Vulcan sex in Spock Must Die!

And Omne! I remember that! Jim, you're some kind of walking Trek encyclopedia. I also remember "The Galactic Whirlpool" and I remember that one kicked ass. By David Gerrold if I'm not mistaken. Also "Trek to Madworld" and "The Starless World" were ones I owned (I once bought a box of Star Trek books from a flea market as a kid) that I can remember. I need to track all of these down.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

1/22/10 11:25am

Also, re: Wink

Deela is one of the hottest villainesses the show ever got. Since I'm often turned off by the '60s aesthetic

underlying a lot of the female costumes on Trek, the episodes where they dress the actress in something halfway attractive and don't splatter her in makeup always get a few extra points from me.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 11:37am

Yes.

Season 3 had a large proportion of the hottest Star Trek guest stars. Deela reminds me a little bit of Droxine from Cloud Minders — another interesting dress.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 5:30pm

Mariette Hartley=hottest Trek chick. and that's not an opinion, that's fact.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 6:47pm

My favorite will always be the chick in What Are Little Girls Made Of. Man alive. I'd slam her like a screen door.

Hartley is ace, as is the chick from Wink.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 9:03pm

Wrong. Mariana Hill as Dr. Helen Noel in "Dagger of the Mind". (Hartley and the Android could easily tie for second, though).

Among my many gripes about TNG is that they took all of the sex and violence out of the show. I like grand concepts, but throw in a little eye-candy and some fist fights, will ya? That, and the characters were boring.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 9:31pm

Marianna Hill as Dr Helen Noel in Dagger of the Mind.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
1/22/10 11:34pm

Sorry folks, but they got it right right from the start: Susan Oliver, both green and normal-skinned is the essence of hotness, beautiful, delicate features, noice bod, changing into ever-more-exotic forms (well, until the end... bummer)..

Plus she got a cameo on the end of so many episodes as the slave-girl... I still get a little frisson of pleasure thinking about her;. Those eyes!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Ajax

1/23/10 12:36am

...This is *\*exactly\** what I was hoping this thread would turn into.

<http://www.allyourtrekarebe...> I think this will prove to be a vital resource for furthering discussion of this important topic:

My top 10, arbitrarily excluding Starfleet personnel:

1. Magda Kovacs, "Mudd's Women" (the brunette)
2. Deela, "Wink of an Eye"
3. Luma, "Spock's Brain" (actually, all the Eeymorg are pretty hot)
4. Droxine, "The Cloud Minders"
5. Andrea, "What Are Little Girls Made Of?"
6. Losira, "That Which Survives"
7. Leila Kalomi, "This Side of Paradise"
8. Lenore Karidian, "Conscience of the King"
9. Isis, "Assignment: Earth" (OK, she's usually a cat, but rrrrowr)
10. T'Pring, "Amok Time"

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)

1/23/10 12:44am

My bad; the brunette Mudd's Woman is actually Ruth Bonaventure.

(I could have a bon adventure with her, lemme tell ya.)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)

1/23/10 8:15pm

Substitute Terri Garr, Barbara Babcock, Yvonne Craig, Susan Oliver, and a couple of others and you've practically got yourself a gas station calendar.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)

1/23/10 11:37pm

She's preggo in the episode, but the divine Julie Newmar guest-starred in a Star Trek episode, Friday's Child.

Why are we excluding Starfleet personnel again? Celeste Yarnell was a yeoman.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)

1/23/10 11:56pm

Regardless of personal ranking...boy howdy, did Star Trek have a fuckton of hotness or what. Even the non-speaking background crew women were amazing. I think in three seasons of episodes, the original Trek had more awesome hot chickness than TNG did in its seven years.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Prole Hole](#)

1/22/10 12:08pm

TNG S1

Zach it is AWESOME that you will be moving on to TNG S1, despite the fact that, if you think S3 TOS is

dispiriting, there's a LOT worse to come. But I hope this doesn't mean you won't be covering STV and ST VI after you complete S3 of TOS?

[Reply](#)

- [Dark Passengerside Airbag](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 12:21pm

Imagine if they started covering MST3K.

A comments section for such an article would effectively be a commentary on a commentary on a commentary on a movie—which may have been made, originally, in part, to comment on something

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 12:21pm

Oh, I think I can find the time for those.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 12:27pm

Well, I think analyzing failures can be more entertaining than lauding successes, or equally so, so I'm looking forward to TNG coverage as well. Even though it gets better, yes.

I've only seen one episode of TNG that really felt like Star Trek to me (Star Trek as in TOS), I don't remember the title. But it was the only one where Picard and Company have to put one over on someone... so many of the TNG episodes felt like "discover this" or "wiggle your way out of that" that it felt really fresh to have one where they run a con. Of course, TOS had lots of episodes where Kirk and Company have to run a con of some kind.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 12:38pm

^ If you're referring to the one where they debunk the woman posing as the devil, that's because it was written for the aborted second Trek series with the TOS crew.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 12:55pm

RE: so many of the TNG episodes felt like "discover this" or "wiggle your way out of that"

Yes, there's always that point around minute 34 when Geordi just starts making shit up. Voltaire even has a song about it.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Prole Hole  
1/22/10 4:02pm

The actual puzzle-solving in Devil's Due was kind of dull, but the rest of the episode is balls-out entertaining. Picard vs the Devil? What's not to like?

[Reply](#)

- [humanist](#)Prole Hole  
1/23/10 4:47pm

star trek cons are always so simplistic, and then they're way too proud of themselves. i'd much rather listen to whatever geordi makes up.

season 3 TNG has some of the best episodes in all of trek history.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 12:22pm

Music

Wink of an Eye was a track job. Empath had an original score by George Duning, who also did the score to Is There In Truth No Beauty, and a part score for And The Children Shall Lead. He had also done the season 2 scores for Metamorphosis and Return To Diana Muldaur (part score), plus the Nazi march in Patterns of Force.

Jeff Bond has good stuff to say about this score. "Silkily melodic ... gently descending string chords and an evocative electronic keyboard melody for the woman..."

I hate this episode so much. I can't even tell if the music is any good: it's possible my hatred has unfairly extended itself to the composer. As a kid I hated Metamorphosis too (and never re-watched it as an adult), so he's been doubly damned for me. Gottacook probably has stuff of more interest to say about this music.

This was recorded on the same day as the Truth No Beauty score (9/6/1968). I think that score is better, maybe even pretty good. Check out the comments for the review of that episode, for more on that music.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)[JimZipCode](#)  
1/22/10 6:44pm

I think Duning's "Empath" music speaks for itself - very much heart-on-sleeve, "I'm being poignant" music, but if ever there were a story that demanded it, this was it. The final act includes the longest dialogue-free passage in TOS (except possibly for the Brahms waltz in "Requiem for Methuselah" by Ivan Ditmars), and Duning did especially well here in saying what there was no dialogue to say.

Of course the episode is absurd, but I have long thought that some TV composers excel in proportion to the absurdity of the episode they're scoring; another example is Bruce Broughton's work for the series Dallas during its early-1980s heyday.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)[JimZipCode](#)  
1/24/10 12:11am

Wow.

For some strange reason, I have a fondness for the music in the third season. It isn't "Amok Time" or "Doomsday Machine" etc., but especially with the softer moments, I just remember enjoying the music here. Is it possible the music is more prominent in season 3?

I hated "Metamorphosis" also, very much so actually, but I think the music from that episode is gorgeous.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)[JimZipCode](#)  
1/25/10 4:59pm

Gottacook, in the comments on the Is There In Truth No Beauty review, you specifically called out:

CBS.com"one element common to both scores: a 10-note motif beginning with a downward arpeggio, a 4th followed by an augmented 4th (E-B-F), heard among other places in the final scene here (at 49:28 in the version)."

cbs.comThe moment at 49:28 that you mention is when Spock removes his visor after he's beamed Miranda away. The motif also gets a nice clear statement at the bookend moment, when Spock puts on his visor before beaming Miranda aboard at the start of the episode, 1:25 on . The CD recording of the Truth No Beauty score, that I linked in the other comments, starts with that motif.

cbs.comIn Empath, you hear this motif at: (timings from )

14:45, after Spock has neck-pinned the Vian.

29:20, after Spock tells McCoy that the decision is now Spock's.

30:20, after McCoy injects Spock.

I replied to your comment in the Truth No Beauty threads, but I'm not sure you saw it. That motif is not Duning's. It's a re-arrangement for soupy strings of a Spock motif from Gerald Fried's score for Amok Time.

cbs.comIn Amok Time, the main statement is in guitar in the cue called "Mr Spock". This is played when Kirk and Spock are talking in Spock's quarters at the beginning of the episode, after the credits. Spock shouts "No, I must - !" At 4:07 on . You can also hear the motif in (I think) woodwinds during the cold open. This is a cue called "Prying", at 1:35, right after Spock has thrown Nurse Chapel out of his quarters, before they break for commercial. Sort of a frenzied "there's trouble!" version of it, woodwinds before diving into the bass for some variations and then a blast as we break for the opening credits.

Duning uses it as his Spock motif in the Empath and Truth No Beauty scores, which is certainly appropriate. Duning gives a slightly more extended homage to Fried's score in the Empath cue at 30:20 after McCoy injects Spock. As Spock passes out at 30:30, Duning continues with the the "Mr Spock" cue, the exact same descending series of notes that are played by cello in Fried's score. (Not the famous "Vulcan" cello theme, this is music that leads up to that.) Here they're in higher strings, violins I guess.

That's nice. I'm not aware of TOS composers quoting other composers in their scores (except that all of them had to quote Courage's fanfare in various ways). Leads me to think Duning must have been a fan of Fried's score. Or maybe they were friends or something.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode  
1/28/10 11:00pm

Of course - "Amok Time"! It's been a while since I'd seen that, but now I recall the same motif in the various arrangements you mention. I salute you, JZC. The Internet is a grand thing.

Regarding Steiner's "Black Ship Tension" cue used by Duning in season 3, from a previous discussion: Yes, I do mean that Duning wrote the theme into the score itself, and above it he wrote " 'Black Ship Tension' by Fred Steiner", in one of the cue sheets I viewed in July 1985 at USC. Don't recall offhand whether it was in "Empath" or "Is There in Truth..." - I haven't seen an episode in quite a while, too busy with real life.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 12:46pm

Huzzah with caveat

Glad to hear about the proposed Next Gen recaps, Mr. Handlen, but are you ever going to finish the X-Files?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)SpindleFiend  
1/22/10 1:20pm

Nope. Not enough interest from readers.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)SpindleFiend  
1/22/10 1:28pm

Zack, how is that determined? Solely based on comments, or pageviews?

[Reply](#)

- [Fatti Smith](#)SpindleFiend  
1/22/10 1:32pm

Bullshit! I'm interested!

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)SpindleFiend  
1/22/10 3:28pm

That's too bad. I was enjoying them. And it hardly needs mentioning that all internet content should be determined by my personal taste.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)SpindleFiend  
1/22/10 4:11pm

Wow, that's hard to believe, going by the Fringe comments.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)SpindleFiend  
8/27/10 11:14pm

HAH! Behold the renewal of the X-Files recaps! I am VICTORIOUS!

(And, given that I went back to find this post, more than slightly pathetic.)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:28am

Wink of an Eye

I was always bothered by this episode - wouldn't Kirk have died of old age before anyone had a chance to do anything?

For that matter, wouldn't the Scalosians all have died of old age before anyone responded to the signal?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Penis Van Lesbian  
1/22/10 12:20pm

Well, let's say aging is caused by mutagenic chemicals and rays we're bombarded with all our lives. Proportionally, the Scalosians are hit with fewer of these per unit time (their time) than we are, and age much more slowly. Plus, their superaccelerated bodies repair these damages much more quickly than in regular-time people.

It's an idea as good as the rest of the episode, right?



[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Penis Van Lesbian](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/22/10 12:36pm

Not bad - but it still implies that Kirk spend several years speeded up...

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/22/10 2:42pm

Kirk and the quick hottie would have had to make sure they had really gentle sex. Otherwise, Kirk would have aged and died while banging her.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/22/10 6:56pm

I always thought of it as more of a "different vibration" thing, not so much accelerated time. Try that.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#) Penis Van Lesbian  
1/22/10 7:40pm

And wouldn't he get "cell damage" when they, you know, did it?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Fatti Smith](#) Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 1:32pm

B5

After you finish with Star Trek—or hell, before you finish with Star Trek—I'd love to see you tackle Babylon 5. Yeah, the first season is unbearable, but got-damn if seasons 3 and 4 don't contain some of the best sci-fi I've seen on TV.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#) Fatti Smith  
1/22/10 1:52pm

I watched B5 until half-way through the fourth season, and it's true that the Shadow/Vorlon battle was awesome. But almost immediately after that the show lost my interest. Is it worth going back and finishing?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#) Fatti Smith  
1/22/10 2:07pm

Uh, you missed the Earth Civil War then. In other words, yes. Yes, it is worth it.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#) Fatti Smith  
1/22/10 2:33pm

If you haven't seen Vir Cotto's little wave, then you have not seen the best payoff in TV short of Jon Stewart taking apart Carson Tucker.

[Reply](#)

- [Dark Passengerside Airbag](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:11am

Take the monolith in 2001  
You can excavate it underneath this firstie

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)Dark Passengerside Airbag  
1/22/10 11:17am

Die in a photon torpedo malfunction.

[Reply](#)

- [justpassingby](#)Dark Passengerside Airbag  
1/22/10 11:19am

May it fall on you and crush you.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Dark Passengerside Airbag  
1/22/10 12:47pm

May God hate you and all your kind, may you turn orange in hue, and may your head fall off at an inconvenient moment.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Dark Passengerside Airbag  
1/22/10 1:07pm

May you be raped by Chekovs and your brain placed in a jar.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 3:33pm

Blink of an Eye  
For another episode with a kinda-sorta same basic premise as "Wink of an Eye" (planet of people moving faster than the universe around them), check out the excellent "Blink of an Eye" from Voyager's sixth season.

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#)uosdwiS r jewoH  
1/22/10 3:35pm

The episode was so nice I said it twice.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)uosdwiS r jewoH  
1/22/10 4:19pm

Most Voyager plots are on at least their second use, so I'd say you're doing alright.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)uosdwiS r jewoH  
1/24/10 9:16pm

Yeah, that is a good Voyager episode; the first few minutes were boring, but it gets much, much better. The holographic Doc even has "another life" down on the planet, almost rivaling that of Picard's in TNG's "Inner Light."

[Reply](#)

- [uosdwiS r jewoH](#)Zack Handlen

1/22/10 3:33pm

Blink of an Eye

For another episode with a kinda-sorta same basic premise as "Wink of an Eye" (planet of people moving faster than the universe around them), check out the excellent "Blink of an Eye" from Voyager's sixth season.

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At SugartuosdwiS r jewoH](#)

1/22/10 7:44pm

And This Old House's "Sink With a Pie"

[Reply](#)

- [George LiquoruosdwiS r jewoH](#)

1/22/10 11:15pm

Soo.. up until then, he'd actually been trying to act?

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IVuosdwiS r jewoH](#)

1/24/10 9:18pm

It's sad that Voyager effectively dropped the Maquis vs. Federation aspect of the show. I don't blame Beltran for "phoning it in," since he probably thought he'd been cast in an exciting part.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCodeZack Handlen](#)

1/22/10 11:39am

Why would you conduct science where you can't see anything?

My wife asks that every time an episode of CSI comes on.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavidJimZipCode](#)

1/22/10 12:23pm

When I "conduct science" with your wife I make sure I can see everything.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu JrJimZipCode](#)

1/22/10 11:40pm

You sound like Patrick Stewart on 'Extras'...

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers LibidoZack Handlen](#)

1/22/10 12:28pm

So?

No Golden Girls coverage or Chekov rape?

[Reply](#)

- [St. GodSheldon Coopers Libido](#)

1/22/10 4:37pm

I don't remember, were there rapey undertones in the torturing of Gem by the bald aliens?

[Reply](#)

- [St. GodSheldon Coopers Libido](#)

1/22/10 6:46pm

Just trying to work towards the quota of using the word "rapey".

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:38am

Deela, by the way...  
... was played by Darren McGavin's wife.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Dark Passengerside Airbag](#)blasmo  
1/22/10 11:52am

And as Deela she wore a one-leg-showing dress, an inspiration for McGavin's major award

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 11:15am

The second season of TNG  
is far better than the first. Best of luck to you on surviving, for instance, Angel One.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bad Horse  
1/22/10 11:16am

What's that you say?

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Zack Handlen  
1/24/10 9:21pm

"Empath" and "Wink Of An Eye"

"The Empath" is essentially a bottle-show, AKA a 'bottle episode':

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

From my comments on "The Empath," made in the summer of 2008 before life turned into a decroded pile of garbage:

Quite possibly Trek's most impressive bottle-show ever, since the production values are so austere as to make a high school staging of Our Town look like Barry Lyndon vs Alien vs Predator vs AT-ATs, but it isn't brilliant.

And from my comments on "Wink Of An Eye" from the same time period:

For the absolute last time: you cannot dodge a beam of light by speeding up your metabolism. If they're still making Red Bull in the 23rd century, someone is bound to try doing this. Late-breaking news! The excellent and addictive website TV Tropes has an entry on this story gimmick, branding it Caffeine Bullet Time.

The TV Tropes link:

[http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/...](http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/)

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Strange\\_Bundle](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 2:43pm

Pbbt.

Here's h0ping we see just how many Next Generation eps really were straight rip-offs of TOS episodes.

Funny you felt that way about Empath, because my memories of it (from when I was a kid) were that it really stood out for me. That this woman could take on wounds from someone else, it had a big affect on my growing mind.

I hope people aren't talking about Wink of an Eye being sexist because Kirk is a stud and that the gal must mate with him because, really, it's a reversed gender role of the Brain that Wouldn't Die.

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen  
3/06/14 10:11am

I agree that Gem was a bad character. The actress was bad and it looked like she was performing mime. Why did she even have to be mute? That just made it worse, like you were watching a silent film from the 1920s. The acting between her and Shatner was hammy. The episode was just very mediocre.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [MrExcitement](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 1:07pm

Possible spell-check error joke in progress

She can taste my patience anytime! I've got the patience of a mule - long and unrelenting.

[Reply](#)

- [thohan](#)Zack Handlen  
11/05/15 7:14pm

Ah man. Lileks sent me here and this is really fun writing. I'm going to have to read the whole series now.

[Reply](#)

- [dudeguy](#)Zack Handlen  
1/22/10 3:15pm

Hahahahahahaha

Dude, you made a Jem joke. +10.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Elaan of Troyius"/"Whom Gods Destroy"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published January 29, 2010

[Comments \(120\)](#)



Ah, women. Women, women, women, women, women. They're so bizarre, amiright guys? They just don't make *sense*. Not the way men do! All their lady feelings and childbirthing and there's that whole thing with cramps and periods. They're not rational. They're impulsive and violent and loud and they care about sports way too—damn, wrong stereotype here, let me back up. Not rational. Definitely not rational. And so scary! I mean, a woman has all these thoughts going on in her head, and I just don't know what any of them are. How can I deal with that? I suppose I could accept that, basic differences of biology aside, people are people. That's hard work, though. Then I'd have to actually get to know a "woman." Like, listening and everything. So, pffft. They're totally insane!

I was worried that "Women be different from men" would be the main point of "Elaan of Troyius," because while the title character is literally from an alien civilization, and, as such, bound to have a different approach to life, there was a whole lot of "Gosh, those ladies, eh?" dialog flying around. Once Elaan arrives on the *Enterprise*, dressed in her predictably revealing warrior-princes outfit and shouting like she owns the place, the danger of shrew-taming is hard to ignore. At one point, Kirk even threatens to spank her, which couldn't possibly end in a galactic war. But then she shows a moment of vulnerability, she cries, her tears make Kirk love her (literally), and—well, things got a little more interesting. I was expecting to really, really dislike "Troyius," but it handled itself well in the second half. I guess sometimes, the awkwardness of season 3 can actually be a good thing.

"Troyius" is two episodes, then, and you can draw the line between them quite neatly. Part one has the *Enterprise* ferrying Elaan, the "Dohlman" of the planet Elas, to the planet Troyius for her wedding to a member of the Troyian royal family. The two cultures aren't what you'd call friendly, but they've arrived at a point in their technological development where they are capable of that most romantic of phrases, "mutually assured destruction." The marriage is supposed to creating a lasting peace, and to that end, the Troyians have sent Petri, their ambassador to the Elasiens, to instruct Elaan on Troyian custom and etiquette and facilitate a smooth transition.

Petri is a ninny, though. He's lousy at his job, and has no idea how to handle Elaan's tyrannical demands and basic unwillingness to play nice. This is played for laughs. It should be about a culture clash—it's a very broad clash, and it would've been nice to get a clearer sense of the Troyians (if Petri is the best they have to offer, I don't really buy them

as a threat), but farce doesn't have to be deep to be funny. "Troyius," however, is less interested in how aliens make friends and more interested in gags about the incomprehensibility of the female mind. Elaan isn't just a proud warrior and ruler required to learn new ways from her lifelong enemy—she's also got those troublesome ladyparts, and the irrationality that, apparently, comes with them.

We all know where this is going, right? Elaan, played by France Nuyen, is pretty and wears revealing clothes, and Kirk is the only one with the guts to stand up to her. So it isn't too long before you start waiting for certain beats—and, for a while anyway, the episode obliges. We got the increased tension, the shouting, Kirk's refusal to back down, threats of spanking, and then, a moment of vulnerability from Elaan, and the relationship begins to blossom. Oh, and there are magical tears, too! Totally forgot those. If an Elasian man touches the tears of an Elasian woman, that man will fall completely and hopelessly in love with the crying woman, which is presumably some kind of evolutionary development for ensuring that sad people have someone to drive to the store and get them ice cream. Elaan cries, Kirk, not realizing the danger, wipes those tears away—and, well, there you go.

It's at this point that "Troyius" starts its transition. If you'd asked me to predict the rest of the episode after Elaan and Kirk hooked up, I would've guessed it would have something to do with Kirk interfering with the wedding, or being tempted to interfere, and there would probably be scenes of him teaching her manners while they did that whole "staring is sexy" eye contact game. (Petri is taken out of the action when Elaan stabs him. He doesn't die, but he refuses to make any more attempts at instruction.) Instead, we get a nifty space battle against the Klingons, a traitor in the Elasians, an unexpected source of dilithium crystals, and a curiously muted performance from Shatner that does a good job at conveying his internal struggle between feeling and duty without overselling it.

We all know Kirk's first love will always be the *Enterprise*. But what's smart here has less to do with an unexpected resolution, and more about the subtle way the romance between Kirk and Elaan plays out. Once he's been affected by the tears, Kirk doesn't spout love poetry, he doesn't hesitate in doing his job, and there's a definite lack of visible angst. Elaan is clearly disappointed—and to her credit, she's respectful of his wishes—so instead of melodrama, we get, for this series, a relatively restrained minor tragedy. McCoy finds an actual cure for the tears' biological effects at the episode's end, but it's irrelevant at that point. Elaan has left, impressed by Kirk's behavior enough to willingly enter the next phase of her life for the sake of her people, and Kirk has made the same decision he always makes. Apart from a short conversation between McCoy and Spock, the point isn't lectured or shoved in our faces. And while it's information we've had for a while now, and the episode as a whole isn't terrific, it at least lets the characters exit with more dignity than they had coming in. Elaan doesn't have to be humiliated or treated like a child, which is a relief. And, thank god, no spanking.

If "Troyius" starts weak but gains its footing, "Whom Gods Destroy" has an opposite trajectory, opening with a cool setting and colorful villain before falling into tedium. The elements are all there for a fun, thrilling hour, and I have a hard time pinpointing exactly where the failure begins, but I was definitely checking my watch by the end. (Or, more accurately, hitting the select button on my Playstation3 controller to see how much time was left.)

"Gods" has a similar set-up to the first season episode, "Dagger of the Mind": we've got an asylum for dangerous crazy people, a difficult to access location, a machine that induces over-acting in its subjects, and a potential cure for the crazies. Only in this case, the villain isn't the head of the facility, but the nuttiest loon in the building, and the cure isn't a false mental treatment that destroys minds, but a magical medicine that can induce sanity. Plus, it's an Kirk-and-Spock mission, so there are no annoying female doctors around to confuse the issue. But both episodes share that sense of isolation, and both acknowledge that even in the perfect future of Starfleet, not everybody has all their screws as tight as they need to be.

Actually, "Gods" cheats on that last one. While the optimist in me appreciates the attraction of finding some magical cure-all that can make madness go away, it stretches credibility. I'm willing to accept a certain level of magic in science fiction, but there needs to be a basic connection to reality to make that work. The conception of mental illness here is off-the-mark, which isn't surprising, but the naivety of believing a drug can resolve years of instability and inner turmoil puts this firmly into Saturday morning cartoon reality levels. Happy endings are great, but if they come too easily, we feel cheated. (I am so terribly sorry for the potential pun in the previous sentence.) At least I do. There has to be a cost, or else the victory becomes meaningless.

Speaking of cartoons, I got a serious Batman vibe from the set-up: an asylum for the most dangerous lunatics in the galaxy, and the maddest hatter (or the joker in the deck, if you follow) of all gets free and takes the place over, letting all the other lunatics out to play. Kirk and Spock fall for the trap, and have to endure Garth (Captain Crazy pants), his fevered monologues, his delusional plans for the future, and his dinner parties. Basically, it's Arkham Asylum, only the green chick isn't big on plants. And that's totally cool, right?

It should've been, anyway. Garth is a decent villain, Marta, the green-skinned chick, is appropriately hot/crazy, and... well, I dunno. It just didn't play out as well as I hoped. Maybe because, once you get past the premise, there's not a lot going on here. Garth has something of a past, Kirk used to respect him, but the tension between them isn't strong. Garth also has the ability to shape change, which, again, is stretching credibility. They justify it with some junk about "cellular regeneration," but since Garth's clothes also change every time he changes form, I'm not sure I buy that. (Although maybe he's just naked all the time, and the clothes are part of his skin? Which is ew, frankly.) Like the magical cure-all medicine that Spock and Kirk carry, Garth's powers are lazy writing. It cheapens everything else because it's harder to get overly invested in a story when there's a chance (no matter how remote) that somebody could say, "A wizard did it," and everyone listening would nod and move on. The god-like beings are obviously problematic in this regard, but least then there's some moderate justification for their abilities, no matter how conveniently remote. Here, Garth is a regular guy who happens to be able to completely change his physical form with the same amount of energy it takes the average person to sneeze.

"Gods" has its moments. The opening is effective, and it's creepy trying to imagine what the nutters are going to come up with next. (Apparently, it's dancing and exploding, always a strong choice.) I like that Kirk is smart enough to leave a counter sign with Scott, although I don't like how we're given no real reason for him to do so on this mission—y'know, the one where's it crucially important for reasons Kirk could not have anticipated. We've never had evidence of a code any of the other times Kirk has beamed down someplace, and it would've been nice if either Scotty or McCoy had some throwaway exposition to cover the discrepancy. Something like, "Oh, so that's standard operating procedure when visiting the Planet of the Incredibly Dangerous Sociopaths, then?"

The obvious reason why the counter sign is here is because without it, Garth could've faked his way back onto the Enterprise, and then we'd have a very different episode on our hands. I'm not sure if it would've been a better one—we've already had dueling Kirks—but at least it would've had more risk. It's not just that we know Kirk isn't going to die, or that he and Spock will survive whatever torture they're put through. It's that without any real danger, there's nothing else to keep us watching. It's a goofy, by-the-numbers piece of work, and it goes on longer than it needs to. I suppose there's some pathos to having Garth cured at the end, but it's hollow. I mean, he blew up a green chick. You don't take a pill to make that feel better.

#### **Grades:**

**"Elaan of Troyius": B**

**"Whom Gods Destroy": C+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- Elaan's "I don't know how to make people like me," confession is an odd moment. She makes it clear later on that she chose Kirk, so the crying may have been a way to get him to drop his guard. But it sounded honest, in a way that made me like the character a little more.
- Kirk and Elaan's final exchange was nice as well: "Remember me." "I have no choice." "Nor have I."
- "The antidote to a woman of Elas is a starship. The Enterprise infected Kirk long before the Dohlman did."
- Spock, on Marta's "sexy" dance: "It is somewhat reminiscent of the dances children do in Vulcan nursery school." Eat that, Simon Cowell.
- Next week, it's "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield," and "The Mark Of Gideon"

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (119)
- Pending



Sort by:  
Popular

- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 11:14am

Elaan

is just the first in a line of Trek plots with similar beats. The Perfect Mate from TNG and (ugh...)Precious Cargo from (ugh...) Enterprise hit the same marks.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:24am

I'd argue that TNG did it best though, which usually isn't the case.

[Reply](#)

- [Oliver Miller](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:35am

I'm sure that I'm dumb, but it took me a while to get the pun in "Elaan of Troyius."

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:36am

For as great as TNG is, there were some pretty stinker episodes, especially in the first two seasons.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:37am

What's really dumb is making that pun in the first place. Your stupid idea filter probably blocked it out.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:42am

Hell, TNG probably did that plot as good as it can be done, and it still created massive internet flamewars over the sexism. I also recall the mate in question being pretty hot. Yup, she was hot all right, spots or no spots.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:45am

It was Famke fucking Janssen. Damn right she was hot.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 11:55am

If she had a kid, she'd be a MILF

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 12:29pm

Also the Voyager ep with Virginia Madsen. That was a pretty terrible episode, but it was a Chakotay episode, so what do you expect.

I'm firmly of the belief that TOS and DS9 were the best Star Trek series because TOS wasn't an ensemble (only Shat, Nimoy and Kelley are in the title sequence) and DS9 was a solid ensemble. All the others had 2-3 good characters and episodes focusing on those characters tended to be good, but the episodes focusing on the rest of the dead weight brought those shows down.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 12:57pm

I hadn't realized until now that "The Perfect Mate" is the same plot as "Elaan of Troyius". But it's true, that (TNG) episode is about as good as you can get with this premise. There's some pathos there.

@Eponymous: Good diagnosis. One of TNG's big weaknesses is that they treat it like an ensemble show when there are really maybe three characters they should focus on.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 2:04pm

@Chad: I don't know if it's really a pun, per se...

But "Elaan of Troyius"? Bears a striking similarity to "Helen of Troy", no?

Helen of Troy, who was to be married to Paris in order to assure peace between the two nations. There are certain similarities there to this story.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 2:07pm

Oh and also, "elan" means strong feelings, or passion. So there's that punne too.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 2:12pm

It's not a pun, so much as a lame bit of classical reference. "Elaan" is Helen, "Troyius" is Troy, and presumably "Elas" is "Hellas", or Greece.

Though as I remember the story, Paris (a Trojan) kidnaps Helen (because Aphrodite awarded her to him as a bribe for declaring her the winner of a beauty contest... don't ask), and the Trojan War starts because the Greeks want her back. That's why she has "the face that launched a thousand ships". So the similarity really ends with the names.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 2:18pm

And apparently I suck at remembering how the whole Helen/Paris relationship went.

I blame Brad Pitt.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse

1/29/10 2:22pm

All of which bring up the question: why did the writers bother to use these names if they weren't going to go whole hog and do a Trekkified version of the Iliad? (which would have been a much better story, by the way)

Brad Pitt has a lot to answer for.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 2:26pm

@Eponymous: You're right. Ironically, that episode is called Unforgettable, but I completely forgot it existed.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 2:29pm

Brad Pitt is a good excuse for wanting to blank mythological history from ones mind.

Ellan Of Troyus always struck me as a bit on-the-nose for an episode title - granted TOS isn't exactly renowned for underplaying its mythological connections, but still it's unsubtle. I think the episode would function better if was called, "Kirk Falls For Alien Chick With Magic Tears", it really doesn't benefit from the comparison.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 2:32pm

Not a pun. Just another example of Trek's ham-fisted naming convention.

Zeon. Like Zion. Get it? Cause it's space nazis. Clever, no?

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 2:35pm

I was just out of grad school when Perfect Mate came out, and I distinctly recall some pants-tightening moments in that ep. Far more than the skin show the planet of the blondes generated ("Justice"), oddly enough.

[Reply](#)

- [partdavid](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 2:53pm

E Pleb Nista!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 3:04pm

Interestingly, Prole Hole, "Kirk Falls For Alien Chick With Magic Tears" is the Japanese title of the episode.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 3:59pm

@bad horse - I work for a cellular carrier, and I once fixed Famke Jannsen's voicemail, in the course of which learning that Famke Jannsen is so hot, even her voicemail greeting is sexy. I've never heard someone make "Hi, this is Famke, leave a message" sound so good...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 4:42pm

What's her number?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 4:52pm

I can't remember, it was several years ago. but I do recall fighting the urge to listen to her voicemails. As part of the troubleshooting that I was doing, her voicemail passcode was reset the default, so I could have accessed it without her knowing. In the end I did the right thing and didn't listen.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 5:27pm

That's good Hercules Rockefeller. You avoided overhearing about her athlete's foot treatment, or the time she accidentally shat her pants after eating a whole bowl of chili with beans.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 7:14pm

Nope:  
Ship Choice of Kirk- No Cry Lady

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 7:28pm

Also, I liked Precious Cargo.. nice choreography and I was even taken in by the little twist... I disagree that it's the same episode though...  
Dunno the TNG one, but I'm undoubtedly working towards it...

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 8:15pm

Richelieu-  
Check this out!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 8:17pm

Whoops. Here's the link:  
<http://www.sporcle.com/game...>  
I put this together after I was amused by some of the French titles a couple weeks ago.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Bad Horse  
1/29/10 9:37pm

Wow, well over 2 dozen replies, and not one curse for a pox of canceroids, flaming or otherwise. Hats off to you, civil AV Club Trekkies!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Bad Horse  
1/30/10 1:53am

Sometimes it's good to know you've always been an idiot and it isn't just some frightening recent development. I honestly never before caught the title's Helen of Troy pun. I haven't felt this dumb since I set a bunch of turkeys free from a helicopter.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Bad Horse  
1/30/10 8:09pm

God as my witness, I thought turkeys could fly!

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Bad Horse  
1/31/10 1:36pm

Jimmy James, you're awesome! That's a great quiz. In the allotted 10 minutes, I scored 16/25. The 'results' page says that I scored at the 90th percentile.

Without sharing any helpful clues to the \*correct\* answers, here are the ones that I missed, and my big excuse for my failure in each case:

- \* Friday's Child----->French title sort of almost makes sense, but the answer didn't pop right into my head.
- \* Space Seed----->French title is obvious, but I thought of "Plato's Stepchildren."
- \* Plato's Stepchildren----->French title super-vague.
- \* The Naked Time----->French title more suggestive of "Tholian Web," but I should've gotten this anyway.
- \* For The World Is Hollow...----->French title TOTALLY GENERIC and un-guessable.
- \* The Man Trap----->French title utterly nonsensical.
- \* What Are Little Girls Made Of?>French title nonsensical, and my guess was "Shore Leave."
- \* Let That Be Yr Last Battlefield>French title too generic, which is a recurrent complaint.
- \* The Dagger of the Mind----->French title put me in mind of Operation: Annihilate!, but I have no excuse for missing this one!

(I didn't use TABs in that; if it looks all screwy, copy it into Notepad, or, letting my Mac bias show, copy it into TextEdit.) The only failures that are totally embarrassing to me are "Space Seed," "The Naked Time," and "Dagger Of The Mind." I definitely won't beat myself up over the other ones. According to the 'most missed' link, most people \*were\* able to figure out "The Naked Time"; however, the ones I missed track pretty darned well with the ones that other people typically miss. You know why? The French... it is inscrutable...

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Bad Horse  
1/31/10 11:09pm

@Eponymous - You're right about the ensemble aspect of DS9. They were all well rounded characters who didn't revert into simple caricatures, like on Voyager, as the series progressed. Ironically, DS9 was considered "boring" because it didn't revolve around a ship exploring the galaxy. I think the static location gave the writers an opportunity to focus on characters and relationships, rather than falling back on the specific plot point about returning home.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 9:39am

The funny thing is, DS9 was the best at action and comedy as well, and none of the other series have anything approaching its fleet battle scenes.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 10:41am

DS9 didn't get a lot of respect at the time, but based on the comments its receives on this board week after week, it might have been the best series, after all.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 1:23pm

I've always thought DS9 was the best series, precisely because they stayed in one place so that the stories could build on previous episodes. DS9 was at its weakest when they succumbed to the temptation to make it more like the other series, and sent the crew off in the Defiant.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 2:16pm

Elaan of Troyius Fact: Elaan of Troyius's tears can make you fall eternally in love with her. Too bad she has never cried.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 3:24pm

@Jimmy James!

Wow man! At last a game created just for me!

I got 100% right with 4m20 seconds remaining. Un fortunately, I am not clever enough to find where you xcan see in what percentile you scored— when I tried to post me results to Facebook the whole thing started again..

Any advice? If I try it again I figure it would just be cheating (you used a lot of 3rd season stuff... I wonder why?)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 3:56pm

I was a complete failure at the game. I got the obvious ones, like "Catspaw" and "The Alternative Factor", but most of them stumped me.

Can someone do the same for the Japanese version? Pretty please?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
2/01/10 8:39pm

yeah, that should cut me down to size!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bad Horse  
2/03/10 8:08pm

(If folks are still checking this thread) I got your quiz right here, pal!  
<http://www.sporcle.com/game...>

[Reply](#)

- [The Next Doctor](#)Bad Horse  
6/19/10 10:15am

Thanks, Jimmy James, the quizzes are awesome.  
Japanese people give the best titles...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 11:36am

Last Battlefield is awesome

Not because it's good, which it's not, but for the riveting destruct sequence.

I also liked the scenes in the lounge, rabble-rousing and conversational. There's like 10-15 mins in that episode that are great.

Also, the Riddler! Another serious Batman vibe.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 12:12pm

I have always loved that episode. Of course, the half black/half white thing is stupid, and the ending is a bit too forced, but Gorshin makes the episode a blast, and I do like the dialogue. Though I can remember that as a kid the ending did work for me. I always liked Gorshin's way of getting on the ship too.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 12:28pm

Battlefield is a tremendous piece of work. It is one of the most hilarious examples I've ever seen of the uber-earnest message episode. Right down to Kirk making a point about the black/white guys originating from "the southern part of the galaxy". It's incredibly entertaining in an MST3K kind of way.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 2:34pm

As I recall every destruct sequence which has followed Battlefield has been based on the dialogue in that episode - a real testament to it's strengths. JimZipCode is right, even though we know the Enterprise won't be destroyed, it's a riveting sequence, given real weight by the acting and directing. Dammit, next week!

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 5:11pm

Never thought I'd type these words, but: Hooray for Jud Taylor! - the director of this episode, who deserves most of the credit for those great close-ups, some involving moving cameras, in the destruct sequence.

Many fictional treatments of black/white relations in late 1960s/early 1970s American novels have worn a lot less well than "Battlefield" does.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 6:07pm

I seem to recall Last Battlefield being a really gaping example of budget shortfalls on TOS. The invisible spaceship is obvious enough, but the off-screen descriptions of planetary devastation were worse. Show, not tell, and all that.

[Reply](#)

- [St. GodJimZipCode](#)

1/29/10 6:26pm

Right. I enjoyed the idea of the invisible spaceship that somehow deposits Gorshin on the ship and then destroys itself. But the ending with the two jogging through the Enterprise - at a leisurely clip - was a bit cheesy. But there's some great hammy acting there.

TNG used the destruct sequence quite a few times, didn't they?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad HorseJimZipCode](#)

1/29/10 8:35pm

As I recall, the self-destruct is used 3 times on TNG counting First Contact, and other times suicidal actions like rams and point-blank weapon fire are ordered (but not executed).

[Reply](#)

- [meyerJimZipCode](#)

1/30/10 1:20am

Frank Gorshin almost sells the idea, though. While the "you're half black on the wrong side" metaphor is as subtle as a club with nails in it, I thought it was brilliant when I was 10. The absurdity of it works in its favor.

Depicting the destruction of a whole civilization through a couple of stock shots of London during The Blitz didn't help the episode, if I remember correctly.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IVJimZipCode](#)

1/31/10 1:20pm

"Let That Be Your Last Battlefield" isn't terrible, but it's as (un-)subtle as a truckload full of sledgehammers. Will I re-use that comparison when the AV Club review of "Battlefield" is posted? I certainly plan to.

If J.J. Abrams is lookin' for a plotline for Star Trek 12, he could always use "Let That Be Your Last Cloverfield."

[Reply](#)

- [alurinJimZipCode](#)

2/01/10 1:21pm

Maybe bryan Singer's BSG reboot could be "Let That Be Your Last Battlestar"!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. DarkeJimZipCode](#)

2/01/10 2:41pm

Sure "Let This Be Your Last Battlefield" is about as subtle as Klingon Opera, but the ending still packs a punch - just like Klingon Opera. The fact that the story DOESN'T wimp out with both sides seeing reason, but shows them still locked in endless race hate even after they're all that's left of their civilization, makes it a powerful cautionary tale.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JimZipCodeZack Handlen](#)

1/29/10 11:21am

Tell me you don't shed a tear watching Batgirl suffocate  
And then getting blown up!



Where do you come from, where do you go? Yeah, whose baby are you?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

That'll give you a serious Batman vibe, if anything will.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 11:26am

Yvette really deserved to get some more roles back then. Very nice to look at.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 12:21pm

So who's the gentleman? In the picture at the top Kirk looks her in the eyes, Spock checks out her rack.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 3:35pm

Dude - vulcans do not leer at boobies; Spock was clearly computing the molecular density of the necklace she was wearing or something scientifically pure like that.

scotty, on the other hand, would have been motorboating those cans like a motherfucker.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 4:15pm

OK, fill in the blanks

Spock would compute the molecular density of her necklace

Soctty would have been motorboating her cans

Chekov would get all ——— with her

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 4:49pm

"Russian"?

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 5:04pm

Was Andy Partridge of XTC thinking of Yvonne Craig while writing "Omnibus" (a great track from the early 1990s album Nonsuch): "There's nothing in the world like a green-skinned girl..."?

Two 1968 (Gene Coon-produced) episodes of the Robert Wagner-Malachi Throne series It Takes a Thief featured, separately, Yvonne Craig and Steve Ihnat (with an accent in the latter case).

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JimZipCode  
1/29/10 6:21pm

Hercules, the answer, I believe, is "rapey".

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode

1/29/10 7:16pm

@GottaCook.. I'm doubtful of the XTC reference, though Andy is known as quite the SciFi fan...  
What does the green-skinned girl of the song make curl again? I forget and I'm too lazy to go get the disc...

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)JimZipCode

1/29/10 8:30pm

Had she not died, Marta could have been cured with the magic space thorazine and become a librarian or something—a hot, green space librarian.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode

1/30/10 1:34am

As good a reason as any to renew my card.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode

1/30/10 9:58pm

That's the first time the phrase "renew my card" has sounded obscene.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)JimZipCode

2/01/10 2:21pm

What IS this fetish Kirk has for green-skinned women, anyway?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode

2/01/10 2:44pm

Once you've had green you never go..back in between...?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cattivo](#)Zack Handlen

1/29/10 11:30am

Grades

Switch the grades and I'd agree. I've always enjoyed Whom God Destroys. Garth is such a fun character and we get some more info about the background of the world of Trek with his history. Plus, it's nice to see another Orion finally. It may copy too much from Dagger of the Mind and the Enemy Within, but that's common in Season 3.

Elaan of Troyius never really did anything for me. It's just ok.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Cattivo

1/29/10 12:07pm

I completely agree. "Elaan" didn't do much for me. That was the one that had me checking the clock. I didn't hate it I guess. But "Gods" was fun. As a kid, I loved the two Kirks sequence (which they re-used in Star Trek VI).

Also, any time I have had to come up with some sort of "code phrase", I always used the "Queen to queen..." line from this episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Cattivo  
1/29/10 1:09pm

"I loved the two Kirks sequence (which they re-used in Star Trek VI)"

Ah, that's it. I knew there was another place they used that, but couldn't remember it when I was writing my comment.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Cattivo  
1/29/10 5:13pm

I can't believe I kissed you!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Cattivo  
1/29/10 6:24pm

It must have been your lifelong ambition!

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Cattivo  
1/29/10 9:49pm

What galls me is that the FX for the two Kirks in "Gods" looked so much better than "ST VI."

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Cattivo  
1/29/10 10:11pm

Elaan was at least memorable. It is not misogynistic to have a psychobitch character, these things exist. It's actually Psychobitch Planet. That's why the dude is a weenie, and that's why he gets stabbed. I know a girl who used to throw flower pots and full beers at people. It got better, she's cool now.

The Klingon battle in this one seems tacked on but it's fucking awesome. It might be the only serious ship-to-ship action in the whole series. Previous battles with the Klingons have been fake looking, or handled strictly through exposition. The Romulans just lurk and shoot their fireballs. The wargame episode had Federation ships squaring off, and that was pretty cool.

But this battle here is tits. For once, you get to see two different ships moving and firing and taking damage. You'd think there would have been more of this. I love the episodes that feature ship-to-ship battles. There's only a couple in each season. The fact that they're so rare increases the threat level.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Cattivo  
1/30/10 1:45am

I haven't re-watched this yet - is there more starship zappin' in the "new and improved" CGI version of the episode, or are you talking about the original?

I only have the new CGI sets on disc and while they did a really good job with them ("Doomsday Machine" comes to mind), I can't help but think that there are a couple of old guys (or their ghosts) out there saying, "Wait a minute...where's my goddamn effects shot? I worked really hard on that thing!"

[Reply](#)

- [TheNerdDilettante](#)Cattivo  
1/30/10 7:57am

The second half of "Elaan" is basically a submarine movie and is awesome for it. We saw more of that kind of combat in the movies, but it was, I think, underused in the series.

I really enjoyed "Gods" too. I thought Garth and Marta played just the right kind of crazy. The whole time, though, I was thinking that Kirk should have had a backup countersign that meant "beam us up, but meet us with a couple security teams." It would be easy, just use a different chess move.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Cattivo  
1/30/10 1:53pm

Honestly the battle is pretty short and not much happens, it's just that this stuff was done so sparingly that EofT contains the one and only instance where the Enterprise fights a Klingon ship onscreen. If I'm forgetting another example, somebody please say what it is.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [AV Club Ist Krieg](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 1:18pm

I demand equal treatment for nerds  
Start covering classic Doctor Who.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 1:48pm

Although I think it's an awesome idea, it would be a pretty daunting task.

Where to start?

I'd suggest the Tom Baker years myself. Of course, with the DVD packages running \$100+ for each episode set, it could be a thousand bucks or more just to pick up one season.

I doubt anyone at AV Club could make that kind of commitment. Even Nathan doesn't have that kind of cash.

[Reply](#)

- [AV Club Ist Krieg](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 2:03pm

Oh, I envision a decades-long series of articles from "An Unearthly Child" all the way through "Survival". A veritable AV Club shrine to the classic Whoniverse.

Or just a toes-in-the-water series on the Key To Time arc, which is available in its entirety on Netflix Instant Watch.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 2:05pm

The Key to Time is on Netflix?!?!

Damn you Netflix, why don't you expand into Canada already!!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 2:22pm

Why not cover certain episodes? (Though covering the classics might not be as fun as making fun of some of the more egregious episodes). Maybe cover the episodes that are on the list of "best Doctor

Who episodes" that was voted on? Also, the torrents are pretty easy to find. But I'd be more concerned with the time commitment, not even the cash commitment. There's I think 750+ episodes/parts.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 2:25pm

Please, Zack's got like 20 seasons of latter-day Star Trek ahead of him.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 3:03pm

The Key To Time arc was a lot of fun. Plus, Mary Tamm.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 6:31pm

GodDAMN, Mary Tamm. I've had a hankering for her for 20 years (I'm 29). (When I was 11, I watched some 70s movie that ended up having Tamm in it, and she got nude in it. I wore the fuck out of that VHS.) But those episodes are mostly godawful. Fun, though, as you say. I have most of those on DVD. I'd be happy to lend them to Zach.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
1/29/10 10:18pm

I'll be picking up Next Gen when I finish the last season of the original Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)AV Club Ist Krieg  
2/02/10 10:04am

Well then, let somebody else cover DOCTOR WHO, Zack - or several somebodies, as there's 27 years of the old show, a TV-movie, four seasons of the reboot, plus an entire industry of audio recordings and novels.

Both the old and new series, at least, can be rented off Netflix - or at least, as many as have survived.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 11:24am

The Mark of Gideon

is actually one of my favorites. Not for the acting. Or the plot. Or the writing. But, for the ending which

\*SPOILER ALERT\*

(Do I really need to spoiler alert a TV half a century old?)

has the Enterprise crew becomes complicit in genocide for the sake of the Prime Directive. That's pretty harsh.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Nerd Paragon  
1/29/10 11:34am

I didn't get that as a kid. I watched it a few months ago, on TV Land or Nick @ Nite or something, and at the end I was like "Wait. He's giving them a plague or something."

It's more fucked up than that though, because I seem to remember that they refused to take more conventional approaches to pop growth. Like birth control. Life is too precious! But purposely courting a plague is ok.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Nerd Paragon

1/29/10 2:30pm

The Mark Of Gideon (there's those mythological references) is terrific - I look forward to discussing it next week. I'll still be drunk but hopefully more coherent.

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)Nerd Paragon

1/29/10 2:35pm

Of course. Humans selecting which (other) humans live or die is evil incarnate; random death is just something you have to roll with, even if it was originally deliberate and/or available cures aren't pursued. No choice, no moral consideration - it might as well be Zeus on a bender with the lightning bolts. But, say, birth control - that's making a choice (and contrary to the classic Rush song, choosing not to decide is different... somehow).

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Nerd Paragon

1/29/10 5:52pm

Oh, come on, don't take this seriously - the aftermath of the plot is only one of MANY things that were simply not thought through in the "Gideon" script. The Enterprise crew fooled by transposed transporter coordinates? A non-Federation member constructing a duplicate of Starfleet's most sophisticated ship good enough to fool its captain? Kirk's medical history available to the Gideons as well? Ridiculous, all of it!

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Nerd Paragon

1/29/10 9:39pm

Yeah, Mark of Gideon made no sense. And that other one is horrible. I think they might be horrible from here on out, until the last two.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IV](#)Nerd Paragon

1/31/10 1:15pm

I'm definitely not a fan of "Mark Of Gideon," but I understand one of the motives behind making this episode: budget. They re-used the Enterprise sets. Trek doesn't need to be plausible all the time, but COME ON. A bunch of starving people on an overpopulated planet with dwindling resources are somehow able to mock up large portions of the interior of a top-of-the-line military spacecraft... ?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen

1/29/10 12:14pm

Nice MST3K reference...

...at the top.

"I met this woman, at least I think it was a woman, and she married me."

"Do you have any children?"

"I DON'T REMEMBER!!!"

[Reply](#)

- [El Santoblasmo](#)  
1/29/10 1:59pm

Interestingly, the old chestnut of "men love sports/women don't" confused me at first, since I think the stereotype may have abated in this day and age. Every time I watch a football game of TV, they pan to the female fans who seem 10x more heartbroken than the male fans. I know it's true of my wife, too, who gets super-despondent when the Seahawks lose.

Plus let's not forget that sports movies/TV shows are pretty much becoming chick flicks these days.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefellerblasmo](#)  
1/29/10 4:08pm

hmm, I'm not sure if you got the short end of the stick on that one or not. on the one hand, it would be pretty sweet to have a wife who watches sports. but on the other hand, the Seattle Seahawks?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jrblasmo](#)  
1/29/10 7:22pm

Nothing, but NOTHING on this planet is better than walking around Paris during the World Cup.. the women are as beautiful as ever, but their husbands/boyfriends are once again at home, drinking and watching TV, as they have been for several weeks, the girls are fed up... Stereotypes yes, cliches, yes, but they exist for a reason... and that reason I'll leave to your imaginations...

[Reply](#)

- [El Santoblasmo](#)  
1/30/10 1:46pm

@Drayman - There's no need for ice cream anymore. Facebook and Twitter were pretty much created to vent.

[Reply](#)

- [Ringo Tiberius Baltar IVblasmo](#)  
1/31/10 1:22pm

I'm not a sports fan, being a walking SF database and not a walking sports database, but I'm aware that the Seahawks lose just about every game they play.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [bhar48069](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 4:45pm

'Whom Gods Destroy' Reminded You of 'Batman'  
Because Yvonne Craig played Batgirl.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)bhar48069  
1/30/10 1:22am

Supergirl (1984) had her job complicated by an evil witch. (Also by the Omegahedron, the unobtainium of its day.)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)bhar48069

1/30/10 2:15am

Until the Batgirl franchise gets off the ground, how about the story of an ordinary schlub who ends up dating Lois Lane after Superman throws her to the curb?

<http://www.thisamericanlife...>

(it's the last segment of the show)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santobhar48069](#)

1/30/10 10:53pm

Girls shouldn't be superheroes! I mean, they'd always have to dodge some horny guys trying to spank 'em.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darkebhar48069](#)

2/02/10 10:06am

If they're Wonder Woman, they'll just say "Sure - but you gotta CATCH me first!" ;)

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen

1/29/10 11:34am

Roleplaying in the Star Trek Universe

While playing in the FASA Star Trek RPG, guess which two races the wife wanted to play, an Elani or Orion. Women.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/29/10 1:44pm

We wound up with an entire bridge crew of Caitians. And a Gorn. Because, fucking Gorn, that's why.

That was actually a fun campaign, for as long as it lasted.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/29/10 2:20pm

Ours was fun, but brutal. I usually rolled up a new character every other game.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/29/10 4:38pm

Maybe you should change that red shirt, Sheldon.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

1/29/10 5:09pm

That's why the Redshirts Rebelled and took over. Ever wonder why in TNG the Redshirts were in charge and the Yellow shirts were expendable?

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

1/30/10 11:13am



Garth

Except for one vague post below, no one has commented on Garth being the head Yang from The Omega Glory. Discuss.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/30/10 10:01pm

No, wait, what? Cloud William?

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
1/30/10 11:06pm

Steve Ihnat was not in "The Omega Glory." You likely have him confused with Morgan Woodward, who played Dr. Van Gelder (recipient of the first Vulcan mind meld ever) in "Dagger of the Mind," the first-season mental-hospital episode; Woodward also played Captain Tracy in "The Omega Glory."

WHY do I know this stuff?!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/31/10 10:50pm

Rate what?

There's a "rate it" function up toward the top of this review page. What would we be rating? The Star Trek episodes being discusses? Or the quality of the review itself?

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JimZipCode  
2/01/10 11:40pm

The episode(s).

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
1/29/10 1:16pm

Music

Elaan of Troyius original score by Fred Steiner. Jeff Bond says:

"Steiner wrote one of his most evocative scores... arguably the third season's finest hour... wrote a deceptively simple, mysterious-sounding four note motif, a chord change and variations, often played by woodwinds... quite utilitarian, appearing in an arrogant, agitated brass mode as Elaan throws tantrums or even a militaristic treatment against snare drums... gave the Klingon ship a threatening six-note fanfare of low brass against an extremely agitated, shuttle-cocking woodwind figure. ...more lightly textured than Steiner's monolithic first and second season scores, 'Elaan' was a flowing, beautifully textured work".

I don't remember any themes right now, though I seem to remember liking the music ok. Bond's agenda is to get the great unreleased scores to finally come out on CD, this among them.

(Battlefield was a track job.)

[Reply](#)

- [GanymedeATL](#)Zack Handlen  
1/06/13 3:42pm

E of T was basically 'Taming Of The Shrew', and, well, if you're going to crib sexist lit, it might as well be Shakespeare. I thought the tears were the weakest part of the script. Unless the planet was ruled by women, there's no way Elaan was going to be forced into a marriage against her will.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield"/"The Mark Of Gideon"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 5, 2010

[Comments \(106\)](#)



I've talked about how much I love *Trek's* commitment to Big Ideas, but you'll get no argument from me that sometimes, that commitment has a downside. *Trek* can be inspirational in its vision of a brighter, more open-minded future, but when it decides to put its Special Message Hat on, it can be preachy, tedious, and hilariously unsubtle. (Hence the classic AV Club Inventory, [Space Racism Is Bad](#)) Both episodes this week have points to make, and both put the *Enterprise* and its crew in the position of moral superiority, but "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield" is the clear winner in the stridency sweepstakes. There's cool alien make-up, Frank "The Riddler" Gorshin, and a really good ending. All the rest is speeches; a seemingly endless series of on-the-nose rants that leave you exhausted just listening to them.

The *Enterprise* is on its way to save some lives (and seriously, are they even pretending to have a mission anymore? The ship is basically just Starfleet's go-to for whatever damn thing happens to come up. Of the five years Kirk and crew are supposed to be exploring, I'm betting they spend maybe four of those delivering space newspapers) when it encounters a damaged shuttlecraft floating in space. Kirk has the single inhabitant beamed aboard, a wounded alien with a startling skin color: one half of him is black, the other half is white. McCoy heals him up, Spock discusses the unlikelihood of bi-chromal skin, and when the alien finally wakes, he turns to be an arrogant twerp. He says he's from Cheron (aka, "the southern most part of the galaxy," hint hint), his "need" made it perfectly fine to steal a ship, and anyone who questions him is just a big ole meanie.

None of this really explains anything, and the situation doesn't come any clearer until a second alien arrives on the *Enterprise*, destroying his (invisible) ship while beaming himself onto the bridge. Bele (Frank Gorshin) is also from Cheron, and he's been chasing Lokai, the first alien, for 50,000 years (!?!), to bring him to task for some horrible crime which, unless I zoned out during all the speechifying, never gets explained. It takes a little while, but eventually the metaphor becomes clear: Bele and Lokai hate each other because their black/white coloring is mirror opposites, which is hating someone because of the color of their skin, which is racism. Bele represents the Establishment, aka The Man, and Lokai is the insurgent, willing to commit any act of violence in order to earn the freedom he doesn't even really understand anymore.

There's nothing inherently wrong with using metaphorical science fiction to get your point across, but the metaphors have to be more than just a quick coating of paint. Bele and Lokai never have personalities, despite all the over-acting, and for the most part, Kirk and the rest hang out on the sidelines, trying to dispense wisdom that never gets heard. It was interesting hearing how Starfleet and the Federation deal with alien races outside their organization: Kirk is respectful, but given Lokai's crime (the shuttlecraft theft), refuses to just hand him over to Bele without due processing at a Starfleet base. We've seen the system's bureaucracy at work before, but while it's mostly used as a delaying device here—if Kirk just gave the distinctly unpleasant Lokai to Bele at the start, we wouldn't have much of an episode—it's neat to contrast the oddness of meeting a new race with the menial requirements of diplomacy and government. Whatever the source of the Cheron's enmity, there's still paperwork that needs to be filled out.

No delaying tactic would be perfect without a counter, though, so Bele ends up taking over the ship and trying to force his way back to his home planet. There's a great sequence when Kirk, after exhausting all other options, tells Bele he'd rather blow up the *Enterprise* than let it continue to operate out of his control. Bele thinks this is a bluff, so Kirk initiates the self-destruct. (Is this the first time we've heard the self-destruct code? They used roughly the same system in *Search For Spock*, and I've always dug how straightforward it is.) Bele, realizing that Kirk is just crazy enough to kill 430 people on a matter of principle, backs down. I can't decide if Kirk's behavior here was reckless, or hardcore, or both. But whatever it says about his morality, it makes for a tense, exciting scene.

Although it would've been more effective if the director hadn't insisted on a series of pointlessly tight close-ups. "Battlefield" is full of over-the-top visual touches—I especially liked (ie, snickered at) the way the camera would shake every time someone called a Red Alert. You know it's serious when the camera-man has a seizure! Then there's the ridiculous climax: after a lot of negotiation and power-plays, Bele finally gets the *Enterprise* back to Cheron, only to find every last sapient life-form on the planet dead. (I'm not sure I'd trust the sensors on the ship to make that kind of absolute judgment, but I'll let it pass.) The cities are in ruins, and there are unburied corpses everywhere, because, see, that's the racism end-game: everybody dies. (Honestly, that's the *everything* end-game.) In response to learning that all they've ever known has been destroyed, Bele and Lokai chase each other around the ship for a while, before beaming themselves down to the planet, presumably to continue their chase until they die of exhaustion, or whatever diseases you get from running around a world full of rotting dead people.

Conceptually, that's not bad. Neither Bele or Lokai are likable enough for me to pity them much, but the idea of them stranding themselves in the graveyard of their civilization is striking enough that you can overlook the symbolic heavy-handedness of it. Too bad this ending is undercut by the hilariously goofy shoots of Bele and Lokai prancing through the corridors of the *Enterprise* like idiots, with footage of burning buildings super-imposed over the screen to remind us of their grief. It's terribly silly, and that, really, is why "Battlefield" doesn't work: not for that one scene, but for the episode's unwinking insistence on its righteousness. The alien make-up is a cool visual, there are some good moments, but the message here is so overpowering that it's hard to remember anything else.

So at least "The Mark Of Gideon" lets the mystery last a bit longer, anyway. This time, instead of fighting off a deadly bacterial invasion, the *Enterprise* is running peace talks with the notoriously stand-offish Gideon, and for once it isn't a matter of the *Enterprise* being Starfleet's dogsbody. The Gideons specifically requested Kirk, and asked that he beam down to the planet for negotiations. Which is totally not suspicious at all, and it's just a tremendous shock when Kirk, after beaming, finds himself in a seemingly empty *Enterprise*, still orbiting Gideon.

"Gideon" is typical of the third season, in that it has a strong set-up and a weak resolution, but even the set-up has flaws. We get an awful lot of Kirk wandering around his abandoned ship, doing a voice-over about how confusing everything is, and how he's lost time and doesn't know what happened. This starts off cool, because hey, who doesn't like a good mystery, but quickly takes a turn for the boring. It doesn't help that the one person Kirk does meet, a woman named Odonia, is spacey and dull. Oh, and almost instantly in love with the captain. We eventually learn that Odonia is the daughter of Hidon, Gideon's main ambassador, and this whole thing was a set-up so Odonia could get infected with a disease Kirk had years ago. And if that doesn't sound ridiculous, well, keep listening.

Thankfully, not all of "Gideon" focuses on Kirk being smooth and spreading the sickness. In what initially looks to be a place-holder subplot (a series of scenes that use characters outside the main action to make us feel like there's a larger world, and to make sure the episode lasts the full fifty minutes) turns out to be the ep's strongest element, the increasingly hostile negotiations between Spock and the stonewalling Gideons about Kirk's location. Spock's obvious

frustration at getting the runaround both from the planet below and from Starfleet high command is hilarious and well-written. The ep would've been better served, I think, if it had focused on Spock from the start. The Mystery of the Empty *Enterprise* is a decent hook, but it fails to pay-off. Spock's struggles, while more mundane, have a stronger foundation in character, and giving us the episode from his perspective, without even showing Kirk until maybe halfway through, would've worked well.

So why are the Gideons so interested in James T.? Well, they're all terribly healthy. Terribly, awfully, miserably healthy. Gideon has become over-populated, and they needed an outside disease to decimate the population and make for some more elbow room. I'm not sure how well this concept holds up under actual consideration. Gideon exists in an era of space travel, so why not negotiate with Starfleet for some star-ships? Kirk suggests sterilization and birth control, Hidon explains that the Gideons consider life "sacred." So why is their chosen response to the problem essentially a passive mass murder? We're supposed to be upset that Hidon wants Kirk to stay on Gideon permanently, as a carrier of the disease, but I just can't get my head around all the stupid here. Even worse, the end of the episode has Hidon actually going ahead with his plan, albeit in a different way than he'd initially intended.

See, Kirk and Odonia have fallen in love, or lust, or some indeterminate emotional connection that will dictate Kirk's actions right up until the end credits, after which he'll never mention her again. Hidon's original plan was to use Odonia as a test case, to show his people that he was as willing to sacrifice for the good of the planet as anybody else; after Odonia died, they'd start spreading Kirk's blood around the planet. (How the hell would that work? If the whole point of this is to allow them to kill without actively deciding who lives and who dies, what's the use in maintaining a single vector for the spread of the disease?) But now that Odonia has got a taste of Kirk kissing, she's regretting her life choices; and of course Kirk can't simply let some really hot chick die on his watch. While Kirk argues with Hodin, Spock, in his usual unstoppable fashion, follows in his captain's footsteps, searches the fake *Enterprise* (which is just a model of the real ship—is there a reason for this? If all you needed Kirk for was his blood, you could just strap him down someplace. Diseases aren't like cows, they don't taste better if they've been walking around), takes out a pair of the most inept guards ever, and enters the room with Hodin and Kirk. This gives Kirk the power to get Odonia back to the real *Enterprise*, where McCoy can cure her.

One of my favorite things about this current season is the way Kirk and Spock's relationship continues to make sense, even in the most ridiculous eps. Like in "Blink Of An Eye," here we have Spock following in Jim's footsteps, and when he arrives at the same destination, Kirk shows no surprise whatsoever. It's not so much taking Spock for granted as it is a well-earned display of complete trust. So even when the writing is clunky, or the plots full of holes, there's at least that to come back to, a strong, believable friendship between two very different characters.

Once Odonia is healed, she decides to go back to her people in Kirk's place, and, in effect, be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands (millions?) of her own people. It's an unsettling resolution that's played without any ambiguity whatsoever. As some of you mentioned in the comments last week, "Gideon" has our heroes tacitly assisting in a government sponsored holocaust, without any real regret or moral confusion. Kirk's biggest issue at the end is having to leave Odonia behind. That's another problem when you try and bring in big ideas—you need to follow through on the consequences. "Gideon" tries to create a situation in which semi-genocide is the best, noblest response, but it doesn't justify itself enough to work dramatically.

#### **Grades:**

**"Let That Be Your Last Battlefield": C+**

**"The Mark of Gideon": C+**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- "Battlefield"'s attempts to make oppressor and oppressed equally morally culpable rang false to me. That's another problem about making such an overt metaphor: because of its connection to real-life situations, it's difficult to judge the story on its own terms.
- "You monotone humans are all alike. First you condemn, then you attack!" Oh man, that's so us.
- Spock: "We must acknowledge once and for all that the purpose of diplomacy is to prolong a crisis."
- Up next week, it's "That Which Survives" and "The Lights of Zetar."

## DISCUSSION

- Community (105)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 12:34pm

Gideon

In my opinion, The Mark of Gideon is maybe the worst kind of Star Trek; it isn't horrible like, say, Spock's Brain - which is at least fun to watch - and it isn't great. It just is.

But I will say that the episode creeped me out as a kid. The part when we see all of the people all crammed in there looking at Kirk and the girl is pulled off pretty well. But the premise is pretty stupid; the people won't use birth control because every sperm is sacred, and life is sacred, but courting a plague to wipe out said sacred life is okay?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Strange\\_Bundle](#)St. God  
2/05/10 12:40pm

Sounds like the usual loophole logic that people will take if they follow the letter of the law and not the spirit.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
2/05/10 12:56pm

I'm glad I'm not the only one creeped out by this episode. It probaly led to my fears of aliens looking in my windows at night.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)St. God  
2/05/10 1:08pm

That scene is so incredibly silly & creepy, which makes it so memorable unfortunately.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)St. God  
2/05/10 1:58pm

"The Mark of Gideon's" inconsistencies and idiocies are well known, but the following might shed some light on the Gideons' biology:

I recall that in James Blish's adaptation of this episode, Hodin slices off his fingertip and it grows right back; he does this by way of demonstrating that sterilizing surgery simply won't work for them (this doesn't explain why they couldn't use barrier methods, though). Blish often based his story versions on early drafts of the TV scripts, so it's possible that this regrowth effect may have been planned but was dropped because there was no money to show it by that point in the season. Hence the belief that all life is sacred somewhat absurdly becomes the entire basis for the Gideons' problem.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:22pm

I never quite understood how, if the world was so overpopulated, they had room to build a mock enterprise.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Krakes](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:23pm

Apart from all the other moral and plot hole points, what about this- they live in an era where space travel and colonization of planets is commonplace. If they have a problem with overpopulation, why can't they just create a few space colonies and send their people away? Hell, they can even go the "Hitchhikers" route and send off all the useless types. And wouldn't Starfleet be obliged to help them create such colonies if they asked for help?

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:25pm

I'm with those who were creeped out as a kid by the scenes of the mobs looking into the spaceship window. But even then, I was taken out of the premise by the logistics of the whole thing.

I mean, they built a whole replica of the Enterprise and found the space to put it on their planet. How could that possibly work if there isn't any room to do anything?

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:26pm

@Krakes Have you ever read "The Mote in God's Eye"? would Starfleet want all of the cool worlds filled up with dumb Gideons?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:54pm

It's definitely not the best episode of Trek that there is, but Gideon at least manages some cool imagery (the empty Enterprise, the masses packed against the windows which even if it doesn't make logistical sense is a striking shot) and that wonderful Kirk/Spock playoff. And that relationship between the two of them I think is entirely down to Nimoy and Shatner - they are just so comfortable, and even though the script has them casually not acknowledging each other, the way they play it totally sells it.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
2/05/10 2:59pm

I thought it was pretty neat, visually, as well. Plus, the idea of a whole other enterprise being built is a more practical cheat than the usual "alternate universe" type stuff. The green tint to everything always reminded me of Soylent Green though.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)St. God  
2/05/10 3:33pm

The concept that random death is morally-neutral while directed death is evil isn't new, and if approached carefully could make for good drama. But by not addressing that core issue (fear of someone else making the ultimate decisions, even if the results are clearly beneficial to the tribe), it just seems idiotic. Sort of like the episode where the acting troupe is led by a wanted criminal, IIRC, the crime was that there wasn't enough (food, air, something) to go around, so he took it upon himself to pick and choose, which was unforgivable. And yet the Plan B where everyone dies (or the stronger and more desperate wait for the mob to organically form and just take what they need) is somehow the clear, unambiguously correct decision?

The failure here is not so much the options, but the inability (or unwillingness) to really address them. If the choice was really to, say, execute all criminals or just randomly kill off 10% of the population, do you really think the empty-prison idea would be rejected out of hand by the body public? I sure don't.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
2/05/10 4:12pm

You're talking about "Conscience of the King."

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God  
2/05/10 4:41pm

Of course, as Zack points out, they could just emigrate. Problem solved.

Usually when it's a choice between some people dying and everyone dying, you ask for volunteers.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
2/05/10 7:39pm

Count me in amongst the 'creeped-outers'...

That image is so strong, and I think that was about all they had to motivate the episode (that a desire to reuse sets and save moolah).. For me, the whole thing plays like a padded-out excuse to show that creepy image, which is really all that stuck with me from seeing this as a kid...

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)St. God  
2/06/10 10:53am

Buttsex. Problem solved.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [haysoos](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 1:32pm

Bi-Chromed Curious

The one element I liked in "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield" was the (relatively) subtle left-half/right-half colour reversal of the Cheronians.



To them it's blatantly obvious how different they are, but it has to be pointed out the Enterprise crew (and us). We literally don't notice the difference at first.

Sadly, that's the only vaguely subtle moment in the whole episode, which otherwise reminds me of the worst kind of "thinly veiled allegory theater".

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 1:52pm

It's hard for me to pick just one bad thing about "Battlefield", but I would say it's the 50,000 year chase. That always sounded ridiculous.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must die](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 2:13pm

I always thought this was way too ham fisted. Why not have one with a birthmark on the right and one on the left? Or one be right handed and one be left handed? Or an eyepatch? Anything could get the point across (that this is a meaningless difference) without doing the skin color route, which was just too much.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 2:18pm

Battlefield clearly does not know the meaning of "too much".

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 3:00pm

The biological evolution is that they're all descendants of Raiders fans.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 3:06pm

I'm not convinced verisimilitude was really the point of this episode. It seems a bit churlish to criticise a low-budget show for coming up with an inexpensive method of demonstrating the point of the episode. I don't really know how else they could have done the whole "their skin colours are different and that's why they fight" in any more subtle a way, given it was the 60's and every racially sensitive issue was VERY closely monitored.

Having said that, Kiss would have bee AWESOME in this episode.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)haysoos  
2/05/10 3:07pm

Battlefield certainly appears ham-fisted now, but when six-year old me first saw this, it blew my fucking mind.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chief Engineer](#)haysoos

2/05/10 3:20pm

It always bugged me that when Bele comes out and says what the obvious difference between him and Lokai is, it's that one is white on the right side and the other is black on the right side. I always wished they had nudged it just slightly further from the obvious black/white thing and said, "Ew, he's black on the right side instead of black on the left side."

Nit picky? Sure. But I'm not going to sit here and argue with a half-white like you.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)haysoos

2/05/10 3:54pm

Preach on, Generic Poster.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)haysoos

2/05/10 4:06pm

Yeah, the whole "50,000 year chase" thing was another of those Trek details that I had totally forgotten about from having watched as a kid, then, on seeing again as an adult, been kind of surprised by, thinking "why would they even feel the need to do that?" Hell, even 500 years would be impressively long & get across the point of how relentless the whole chase was while still being within some kind of range of biological plausibility.

See also the whole "the planet is an identical duplicate of Earth" thing from "Miri." I think we can get the whole "these people were just like us" thing without throwing that in.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)haysoos

2/05/10 4:27pm

You're thinking in Earth years. Who knows, their planet might go through a year in 30 days due to a swift revolution around the sun or something.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)haysoos

2/05/10 7:24pm

I think once again the idea is that it is symbolic: They represent humanity, 50,000 years of humans tearing the crap out of each other because of the colour of their skin, etc, etc... The whole (pretty bad) idea is to push the whole thing into the realm of allegory...

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)haysoos

2/05/10 7:37pm

Yep, Generic Poster is on the money. Seeing it as a kid, I thought it was brilliant. And after enduring some pretty ridiculous costumes over the course of the show, the stark black and white characters stand out. It is kind of boring now, though.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)haysoos

2/05/10 10:13pm

One's a great basketball player, but can't dance. The other's an awesome dancer, but can't even dribble. That's subtext.

[Reply](#)

- [Lenoxus](#)El Santo

8/05/17 11:56pm

I'm replying 8 of your earth years later, just to point out that he specifically says "50,000 of your earth years"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen

2/05/10 1:14pm

Lokai's crime

Haven't watched this ep in awhile, but I'm pretty sure Lokai was guilty of fomenting insurrection among his fellow bi-chromes, and Bele also lays the rap for multiple murders on him. He's in such a rush to get Lokai off the ship because Lokai has a rabble-rouser's gift for making aliens feel sorry for him and interfere on his behalf — hence the 50,000 year chase.

I forgive the obvious ham-handedness of the Racism Is Bad, M'kay? message because it's a product of its time. We weren't so very far away from the period where race was a subject Not To Be Talked About On Television when this first aired, so IMO it deserves a break. The arc for controversial topics in popular media generally runs Silence -> Earnestness -> Irony, and we here in stage 3 owe our ability to be clever and subtle in our moralizing to our rather braver forebears in stage 2.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Ajax

2/05/10 1:21pm

Now an exercise for the group. What topics are in what stages of discourse today?

I'd say Quentin Tarantino has made a bold move with Inglourious Basterds to take the Holocaust from stage 2 to stage 3, but hasn't gotten many takers. AIDS is still in stage 2. Abortion, by and large, is somewhere between 1 and 2. What else?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Ajax

2/05/10 1:37pm

Creationism is still largely in stage 1. Even most sci-fi shows won't directly address the topic. Those that do are fairly heavy handed in stage 2.

It's only in Fantasy literature (i.e. Discworld) where stage 3 is even attempted, actually looking at what a Creationist universe would be like.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Ajax

2/05/10 3:00pm

The skin colours and moral centre of Battlefield do look incredibly clunky by today's standards, but at least Battlefield manages to be "about" something in a way that almost none of the episodes in S3 manage to be about anything at all. Although the logic of the episode falls apart under scrutiny, I have to disagree with Zach - to me the script feels like it's genuinely trying to do the whole "sci-fi as analogy" thing. If it falls short (and it does), that's a shame, but I'd rather credit it for ambition than dismiss it for failing to always reach what it's aiming for.

Also, space racism is bad.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Ajax

2/05/10 4:44pm

Excellent question, Ajax!

Definitely abortion. The role of US foreign policy in inspiring Islamist terrorism.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax

2/05/10 7:32pm

Tarantino has definitely tried to deal with the Holocaust differently (and I found the film quite interesting) but 'the next stage'? I think not, and even more, I hope to God not. It may be a victory for storytelling to use it as just another kind of story or tool in the story kit, but something will inevitably be forever lost when that's all it is. Also, fun as it is, there should be some moral qualms about transforming the Jews into sadistic Nazis... You tread on dangerous ground when you start making the moral equivalency argument that Holocaust deniers and Hamas have been trying to make for years for them (and no, I am not saying Tarantino is an anti-semiter: He just really wants to make the coolest fucking film we've ever seen... I just think he should have thought about a few of these issues...) Nonetheless, as a film maker I'm all for films where the moral is 'film can not only save the world, it can actually change history!'

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Ajax

2/05/10 10:41pm

Rich: For my part, I kind of have the feeling that until Hitler and the Holocaust \*do\* assume their rightful historical place alongside Ghengis Khan, Ivan the Terrible, and Robespierre's Reign of Terror as people and events that are inarguably horrific, but also firmly part of a past that doesn't make claims on our everyday attention, we will forever be fighting yesterday's battles and ignoring the world as it stands today.

I don't want to get too deeply into the political weeds here, but consider how foreign policy in the West might be different if we were not forever looking for opportunities to kill Hitler in 1928. I'm not saying that "never again" is not an important precept, but I do think there is a healthy midpoint between Holocaust denial and an endless procession of Nazi movies being thrown up as Oscar-bait year after year.

So I do think that Tarantino's recognition that the Holocaust, aside from everything else, is also the kind of tragedy that forges the kind of bad-ass revenge-seeking anti-heroes that populate the exploitation films he loves, is an important (and healthy) development in our culture. We shouldn't mistake a lack of reverence for a lack of respect.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax

2/06/10 8:18am

I quite agree with the first part of your post, as for the second, I never really said differently, though I really believe he didn't really think those things through. I'm sure the holocaust will join those things (like the Crusades? They were really unimportant until 9/11) when enough time has gone by. It's very difficult when things are in living memory and (aguably) wars are still being fought and lives lost over the issue... Things get touch when (unintentionally, I am certain) your subtext vibrates with things being said by the worst sort of people, ie Jews and Nazis = same things different shirts...

(sorry for all the parantheses, he said paranthetically)

A long time ago here in France, I got roped into playing one of those role-playing games where everyone dressed up and ran around in the woods half-drunk for 3 days. The theme was Braveheart and I was invited along as the token 'real Scottish guy' (though I'm pretty much American through and through)... I had two suggestions, as there were a lot of caves and even a couple of old Nazi Bunkers:

One: We should do a Star Trek role play (just to show I haven't forgotten why we're all here, folks)

Two: We should do a Nazi versus fench Resistance one. People were Horrified! no exaggeration. When I asked why, thye said it was a bad idea, too soon. It turedned out they had one like that and things got out of hand (I have no idea on who's side, but you get the idea)

These 'stages' take care of themselves. Time will help, and it won't be any person who takes up there, i guess is what I meant by my last post.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)Ajax

2/06/10 12:15pm

Also, an excellent point Ajax, that the National Guard was stationed outside and inside my mother's high school while these episodes were being aired.

I mean, you are going to school and coming home through race riots (real ones) where the military is stationed at your school, the impact of racism between two HALF WHITE, HALF BLACK GUYS, JUST THE HALVES ARE SWITCHED might just slap you in the face.

Now we giggle, but 40 years ago (when this aired) I imagine it was EXTREMELY literal.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)Ajax

6/19/14 7:53pm

"and we here in stage 3 owe our ability to be clever and subtle in our moralizing to our rather braver forebears in stage 2."

Genuinely curious—in the last decade, is there an example of a clever and subtle moralizing on race that you think works and has real power? I'd like to take a look if you have a title or two worth recommending.

I'm having trouble seeing what many are finding fault with regarding Battlefield. No one calls Bele or Lokai idiots. Both aliens in the context of a fifty minute episode are thoughtfully fleshed out. As with the way eps like The Empath, or Spectre of the Gun made virtues of no-budget sets, Battlefield makes a virtue of simple clarity wrt the aliens' makeup.

Given that we've hardly absorbed any of the lessons on the destructiveness of prejudice, that race is pretty much as divisive today as it was when the episode first aired, and that it's unlikely gay marriage would be accepted by all the states before, say, 2075 if we adhered entirely to popular referendum,

some of the 'been there, done that, old news' quality in the comments section seems entirely premature.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Jack Strawb  
6/22/14 11:50pm

<http://www.avclub.com/artic...> This is the one that popped into my mind, although YMMV since it's fundamentally comedic:

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 1:14pm

More or less agree with these ratings

You're absolutely correct on The Mark of Gideon. Am I remembering correctly that the show punted on actually showing the destroyed planet, and basically had them just describe it? I seem to recall this episode having many reminders that the show had no budget. I'm really looking forward to "The Lights of Zetar", which has one of the worst reps of all TOS.

And I think you're correct about on-the-nose allegorical sci-fi, though I would argue that genre fare by and large doesn't lend itself to subtle political metaphors. I don't think that stories that thinly veil their allegories can't be artistically satisfying—The Crucible was the most obvious fucking allegory imaginable, and I'd say it has to meet any standard of success—but I mostly think it rests upon the ability of the creative forces behind the work to get all the details right and make a compelling story, instead of just hoping to get by on the audience's recognition. "Battlefield" really kinda fell into the latter trap, but I think this was more due to the basics of the show being weak than the metaphor being too transparent.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Eponymous  
2/05/10 1:19pm

Oops, screwed up:

You're absolutely correct on The Mark of Gideon, \*as well as on "Last Battlefield.\*

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Eponymous  
2/05/10 3:51pm

Zetar has a bad rep because it's fucking terrible; stupid while also being dull and draggy, so it's not even enjoyably bad.

For watchably crappy 3rd-season TOS episodes, I'd way rather watch Turnabout Intruder or Spock's Brain than snoozy sludge like the Lights of Fucking Zetar (as I call it every time it pops up on TV) or the Cloud Minders, another of my nominations for "3rd season TOS eps that don't get enough vitriol."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Eponymous  
2/05/10 4:45pm

Again, these episodes you mentioned are the same as my feelings about Gideon - they aren't hilariously bad like Spock's Brain, and they aren't pretty cool or good like, say, Tholian Web. I'm not sure how many times I've seen Zetar, probably two or three times in my life, and I can hardly

remember a goddamned thing about it. It occupies that awful middle ground of episodes, which, in my opinion, makes it worse than the godawful ones, like The Way to Eden.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Eponymous

2/05/10 5:12pm

which one is Lights of Zetar again? it must be bad because i don't even remember it.

though, i would give these two episodes a higher rating just for the cool imagery and interesting ideas.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Eponymous

2/05/10 6:39pm

Scotty gets a girlfriend (who Kirk refers to as "the girl" despite her being at least in her 30s) who gets possessed by boring alien spirits that make people talk in a stupid slo-mo voice and tell the boring story of their generic civilization and how they drift through the universe possessing people and boring them.

There's some business with some kind of chamber supposed to keep out or drive out the alien spirits, but it's hard to care by that point.

I think Scotty's girlfriend makes the ultimate sacrifice at the end, but by that time the power of boredom has made everything hazy and hard to focus on, so I'm not totally certain.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

2/05/10 7:34pm

Gotta love that 'Cloud Minders' art, though!

and I agree, 'Spock's Brain' and 'Turnabout Intruder' are Shatner-iffic!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Eponymous

2/06/10 4:33am

Lights of Zetar creeped me right the fuck out as a kid. To this day it's the Star Trek episode that I'm scared to watch.

That pressure chamber, I think we also saw it in Space Seed, Kahn used it to torture Kirk. Only other time.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

2/06/10 8:19am

I'm afraids to see Zetar again, but for a different reason...

Actually, with a few exceptions, I'm starting to think I've seen the third season more than any other....

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Eponymous

2/06/10 4:43pm

Scotty's girlfriend rings a bell, but the rest of that episode is a blur. i'm not even sure i saw the whole thing.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 12:31pm

Gideon

About six months ago, I was flipping through the channels on a sunday afternoon (which I don't do much of anymore, given digital cable and electronic tv guides) and I ran into Mark of Gideon. I have had vhs copies of TOS since I was a kid, and then DVDs and now blu ray, but this was the first (suck it) time in decades I sat down and actually watched an episode with commercials and everything. The process made it really nostalgic for me, and I had a great time.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 12:36pm

I call that the no-look first. Or maybe the suckerpunch first.

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 1:27pm

I call it the Spock's Brain of firsties.

[Reply](#)

- [Rex](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 1:33pm

Gideon? Loved his Bible.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 1:49pm

Gideon bibles make good rolling papers.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 2:04pm

Mmm...sacrilicious.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 2:21pm

Yep, I'm a terrible person, etc.

Seriously, though, watching TOS on network tv with local commercials and everything is a totally different experience than watching on DVD. Maybe someday in the future (where we will live most of our lives) DVDs will come with an option to watch period commercials as well.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet



2/05/10 7:40pm

Seeing those 'bumpers' at the end and beginning of each act is very jarring without ads. Here in France people don't even realize what those are for and think it's a weird stylistic 'American' thing to do...

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 9:46pm

Said DVDs of the future should allow you to program in the exact commercials that were playing when you first saw the episodes as a child. (Or man-child, for the fogeys.)

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Thing What Kicks](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/06/10 2:24am

Ellsworth:

The just prevail, sooner or later.

(OK, maybe I'm the only one here who immediately assumed this to be a Too Much Joy reference.)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/06/10 8:23am

i've got DCDs of all The Beatle's appearances on the Ed Sullivan Show and it makes for some fascinating viewings with context.. Might be interesting to watch Trek like that... Once....

Better yet, as long as we're fantasizing, why not with the same commercials you remember being on when you were a kid...

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Matt Keeley](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/07/10 7:55pm

Thing What Kicks: No, me too — you beat me to it. But after all, I Believe In Something.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Tax Code](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 1:56pm

maybe i just dont know how to work my compass ...  
the most southern part of the the galaxy? really?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Tax Code  
2/05/10 2:20pm

I always thought that was bullshit too, but there is actually a galactic south.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Tax Code  
2/05/10 2:25pm

I think the Milky Way galaxy is relatively flat and long, like Saturn's rings. Its easy to forget this, thinking the galaxy should be round.

Anybody know the theory for why the galaxy is on a flat plane?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Tax Code  
2/05/10 7:09pm

It might bear mentioning that there are other galaxies that have a more spheroidal (or at least ellipsoidal) structure. Some folks around the early . mid 20th century believed that galaxies began that way, and formed disks and spirals as interactions brought the initially uncorrelated motions of stars in line with the galaxy's net angular momentum. Now, however, some astrophysicists believe the exact opposite, that galaxies begin as disks and become ellipsoidal blobs as a result of mergers. The stereotype of people from the southern part of the galaxy as racist hicks, however, remains unchallenged.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Tax Code  
2/05/10 9:47pm

You can tell that you're in the southern part of the galaxy by all the rebel flags.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)Tax Code  
2/05/10 10:22pm

I hope Jimmy James will remember that a Southern Galactic Alien don't need him around anyhow.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Tax Code  
2/06/10 8:05am

You know you're from the southern part of the galaxy when you marry your space-cousin.. Am I right?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 12:54pm

0-0-0, Destruct, 0

Zack you are correct- the destruct sequence from Battlefield is the same as in STIII. The only difference is that in Battlefield it is a 30 second countdown, while in Search for Spock it is 1 minute.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 1:07pm

S0 the combination is 1-2-3-4-5?

[Reply](#)

- [KenHR](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 1:35pm

It is?! I have to change the combination on my luggage!

[Reply](#)

- [urgh](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 2:09pm

Dr. Schlotkin will give your daughter back her old nose!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 2:56pm

"You are attempting to detonate the warp core. Are you sure? Y/N"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 4:28pm

I think that's how it went in the TNG episode 11001011, except the computer asked them if they needed a moment to get in touch with their feelings prior to confirming the destruction.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Right Wingnut  
2/05/10 6:20pm

"10,9,8,6..."

"6?! What happened to 7?!"

"Just kidding."

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JammerJim](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 1:50pm

As a kid

I thought "Battlefield" was an amazing bit of theater about how bad racism was. Just wow-inducing. Today I cringe a bit.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)JammerJim  
2/05/10 2:45pm

I thought the same thing.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JammerJim  
2/05/10 7:20pm

JJ, I have to say so did I, though I never really liked it overall: Everyone just seemed so angry!

Also, thanks for the quiz! I dunno if you read my post from last time, but I got 100% with 4:20 remaining, butt hen I was unable to go see in what percentile I was, etc... I've still got the window open if you ahve any suggestions... Very, very cool!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JammerJim  
2/05/10 7:43pm

Richeliu - Close the window and just let it go. Then back away from the computer slowly. I assure you, you'll feel good about the decision.

All kidding aside, that was a cool quiz.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JammerJim  
2/06/10 8:06am

:-)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)JammerJim  
2/06/10 1:59pm

I thought I posted this earlier, but I guess it got lost. Anyway, I made a Japanese sequel:  
<http://www.sporcle.com/game...>

When you're done, you should see a blue link to "See the most missed" if you want to see your percentile.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JammerJim  
2/06/10 6:11pm

Holy Crap! It's really in Japanese!  
Me no likey!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 4:25pm

Sapient?

"Sapient"?

Really, like the company, or the ability?

Perhaps a mis of Homo-Sapiens' and 'Sentient'?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/05/10 4:34pm

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>No:

I took it from Spock's actual quote in the episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/05/10 7:49pm

Excellent! I'll have to really watch it now, I guess!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/05/10 7:50pm

Wow, I just took a gander at that definition!

So the Enterprise's sensors can not only detect intelligent life, but decide whether the life has GOOD JUDGEMENT?

I'm fucking glad my parent's didn't have one of those numbers when I was growing up!

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/06/10 12:26pm

...thus Zack's quip about how he's unsure about the computer's ability to make such judgments.

I'm not scrolling up to quote, but the word (sapience) gave me pause too. It just took a minute for my brain to work it all out in the context of Zacks comment.

But that's what happens to me on Saturday mornings. What's YOUR excuse?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/06/10 2:42pm

I dunno.. stupidity?  
Lack of sapience?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Strange\\_Bundle](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 12:39pm

Twilight Zone, stop being so obvious with your social commentary!

"Gideon" sounds like the inspiration for all Silent Hill games.

I think if pointed, obvious science fiction is to blame for our boredom, it's only because it's not the 1960's any more and we've solved all the problems in the world.

\*jetpack!\*

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Strange\_Bundle  
2/05/10 12:57pm

\*meals in pills!\*

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Strange\_Bundle  
2/05/10 2:27pm

\*my consciousness in a robot body, with big bazongas\*  
God I miss Sealab 2021

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Strange\_Bundle  
2/05/10 2:49pm

I loves me a Barbaubot.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Strange\_Bundle  
2/06/10 8:20am

Yeah, 'wearing it out!'... Rim shot!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 4:51pm

And also...

Shouldn't it be "Let that be your FINAL battlefield?"

I don't mean to say Zack got it wrong, but "last" just trips on the tongue.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/05/10 10:49pm

I disagree. The assonance of "Last Battlefield" adds a sort of rolling grandeur to the title, in keeping with what the writers were going for. It sounds like something carved into a monolith.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 7:53pm

All these years

"(aka, "the southern most part of the galaxy," hint hint)"

All these years and NO, I did not get that.

"I can't decide if Kirk's behavior here was reckless, or hardcore, or both."

Both.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Meander  
2/05/10 10:24pm

But which side was the hardcore side?

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Straw](#)bZack Handlen  
6/19/14 8:04pm

Sorta cross-posting from another thread, on the off chance of a reply:

I don't find anything excessive about Battlefield even now. Granted, that 45 years ago it would have been more clearly and distinctly relevant, but today, when black and brown income are very little improved as a percentage of white income; when as Michelle Alexander writes, drug laws are the new and nearly as disastrously effective Jim Crow; when color abroad is still very nearly the issue it was half a century ago, and when whatever progress we've made in that regard has probably been devoured by the steps back we've taken with respect to religious strife and carnage, Battlefield is no less relevant today than it was when it first aired.

There's also no reason to limit the allegory to race prejudice. Substitute sexual orientation for color and it still holds up perfectly well. It's not difficult to imagine Bele saying something commensurate with the original dialogue, such as "You don't understand. Lokai loves *other men*." Given that it's going to take a Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage before 2070 in about half the states in the US and I think the idea that Battlefield is somehow outdated may be unwarranted urban preening in some of the comments below.

I also think that in unhooking the episode from a direct reference to the US, its applicability is only broadened, and broadened without dilution. I hadn't watch TOS in about 20 years and only re-watched the series over last winter after being laid up following an accident, and I was struck by how remarkably good the best fifteen to twenty episodes are. It's easy to have, as I did, a hazy recollection of that episode with the guys who are black

and white' and decide it must have been schmaltzy and must now be outdated, but damn, it's well written and acted\*\*\*. If you're going to deal with the topic by analogy, when has bigotry been dealt with better on episodic tv, even recently?

\*\*\*Couldn't agree less with Zack's claim that Bele and Lokai are caricatures. In the context of a fifty minute action adventure series, they are in fact smartly fleshed out.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Hank Wellman](#)Zack Handlen  
12/03/15 2:22am

"It was interesting hearing how Starfleet and the Federation deal with alien races outside their organization: Kirk is respectful, but given Lokai's crime (the shuttlecraft theft), refuses to just hand him over to Bele without due processing at a Starfleet base. We've seen the system's bureaucracy at work before, but while it's mostly used as a delaying device here—if Kirk just gave the distinctly unpleasant Lokai to Bele at the start, we wouldn't have much of an episode—it's neat to contrast the oddness of meeting a new race with the menial requirements of diplomacy and government. Whatever the source of the Cheron's enmity, there's still paperwork that needs to be filled out."

I know I'm six years late to this party, but I couldn't let this one go: Kirk refuses to turn Lokai over to Bele because it would deprive Loaki of his right to due process, i.e. his right to a fair trial, and not "due processing" as a bureaucratic delaying technique, and certainly not a menial requirement—it's part of the Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution (the fifth amendment), and it would take an additional amendment to the Constitution (the 14th amendment, enacted in 1868) to force southern states in the post-civil rights era to recognize that right as well. Obviously, in the future, the Federation would recognize this right as well.

Yes, this doesn't make the allegory any less hamfisted, but when Kirk invokes "due process" in this episode, he is essentially telling Bele that the Federation does not tolerate lynch mob justice. Which, in my opinion, makes the Federation's policy of protecting the fundamental rights of "alien races" rather admirable, and not, as suggested above, mere indifference mixed with bureaucracy.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [eh](#)Zack Handlen  
2/06/10 5:09pm

Kid-scary scenes

As someone said above, the creepy empty-Enterprise-with-faces-watching was enough to freak me out when I was a kid, and thus I have a soft spot for this ep, but all the rest of it was so boring, I don't even remember it.

Similar situation with next week's episode, The Lights of Zetar, or whatever. I remember only a woman's face changing color with scary sound effects, and that was quite freaky. But the rest of the episode is a blank, except for the view screen looking like a geometry class.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Zack Handlen  
2/05/10 8:09pm

There is unrest in the forest

There is trouble with the trees. The maples want more sunlight and the oaks ignore their pleas.

[Reply](#)

- [OttawaGlen](#)Zack Handlen  
2/06/10 9:53pm

Let This Be ...

<http://tinyurl.com/yhhxle3...> my first oil painting:

Enjoy!

[Reply](#)



## *Star Trek*: "That Which Survives"/"The Lights Of Zetar"

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 12, 2010

[Comments \(99\)](#)



For all the crazy aliens the *Enterprise* runs into, there's an awful lot of death floating out there in the universe. It seems hardly a week goes by without Kirk stumbling across ghosts or remnants or the remarkably well-preserved security system of some long gone civilization. This is a convenient storytelling out, because we don't know what the dead race was capable of, but it's also creepy if you think about it too long. (And given how much time I've put into this show now, I've thought about nearly every aspect of the series too long.) Each new history of loss adds to a picture of a cosmos haunted by failures. It's remarkable there's room to move. And I can't help thinking of *Poltergeist*, and what happens when you try and building a house on top of a cemetery.

This week, we've got two different haunts assaulting the *Enterprise*. Neither one is intentionally hostile, but both cost lives. Now, it makes sense that contact with an alien race would present innumerable challenges, and that many of those challenges would be potentially fatal to either party. But at least when you're dealing with the living, there's a chance of shared of logic, of a connection. (Okay, if you go by Stanislaw Lem, it's an incredibly *slim* chance, but stay with me.) When dealing with automatons and left-over need, there's not a whole lot of mutual interests to discuss. Mercy doesn't enter into it, because mercy is irrelevant. Either you find a way to beat the system on its own terms, or you blow up. And even if you do win, you don't get to mack on any hot alien babes, which is a total bummer.

There *is* an alien babe in "That Which Survives," but going by what happens to the guys she manages to touch, it ain't worth it. The *Enterprise* finds a strange planet whose development doesn't suit its age, so what the hell, Kirk and a few of the guys beam down to check things out. Spock stays behind to run the ship, and after an earthquake that throws the *Enterprise* 1000 light years away, we get two parallel storylines running for most of the remainder of the episode: Spock and Scotty trying to get back to the mystery planet, and Kirk, McCoy, Sulu, and a couple of soon-to-be-dead guys trying to find a way to survive in a place where all the vegetation is poisonous and there's hardly a drop of water to be found.

There's a third story, actually, that connects those two, and in the end provides an explanation for both—the mystery of the lady in purple who keeps appearing on both the planet and the ship, and generally making a nuisance (and worse) of herself in both places. We'll get to that in a second, but for my money, the most exciting elements of "Survives" were

also the most immediate ones. *Star Trek* only brings up practical concerns when it needs those concerns to create suspense, so it's still refreshing to see Kirk and the others so concerned about basic human needs. It doesn't play hugely into the episode overall, since the *Enterprise* returns before thirst and hunger can become too debilitating, but just having that pressure running in the background of a handful of scenes forces you to think more about how tenuous that five-year exploratory mission truly is. The *Enterprise* is a technological marvel, state of the art, full of medical equipment and machines so far beyond our current capabilities as to appear like magic. But take that away, have something go wrong, and all that fictional innovation is meaningless. A strange planet is as bad as a desert island; worse, because it's a lot harder to contact passing ships. It's good to be reminded how quickly a situation can turn deadly.

Admittedly, having Spock watch your back makes the deadliness a lot less oppressive. Another element of "Survives" that worked well was Spock's dickishness while in command. I've been frustrated before by episodes that try too hard to mock his stoicism, but this one managed to show the half-Vulcan at his best and his worst, his cool competence holding back panic in the crew, while at the same time his refusal to practice even the most basic courtesies pushing everyone's stress to its limit. Spock's rationality looks best when he's observing human foolishness while someone else gives orders. When he's in authority, his insistence on pointing out how foolish everyone else is makes him hard to like; and honestly, I think that's cool. Characters are more interesting when you have to work a little to appreciate them, and it's still possible to identify with Spock even while you cringe at his behavior. There's an outsider-type in a lot of TV, a lone member of an otherwise harmonious social group who constantly asks the most awkward questions and points out the often irrational behavior of everyone around him or her. This type is often easier to identify with than the so-called "normals," because everyone feels like an outsider to varying degrees, and most of us have struggled under the illusion that everyone is working off of some ridiculous system that we can't see for ourselves. So I like seeing Spock being dickish and cold every once in a while, because though I can't condone it, I can relate to it, and that makes his moments of empathy and respect all the more earned.

And as for that third story... Well, apparently the Genesis planet of *Star Trek III* wasn't the first really, really big mistake in the universe, because the "ghost planet" that Kirk and the others are marooned on was created by a civilization that died out shortly after. When they created the planet, they created a deadly disease, which wound up killing everybody, and now all that's left is a really terrible vacation spot, and a security system that sends out drones (all of whom look like the same hot chick) specifically designed to kill certain targets. It's a neat concept, but it doesn't really explain why the supposedly "noble" woman who served as the model for the drones would create a system this aggressive in its destructive capabilities. What is there on the ghost planet to protect? And once the *Enterprise* gets thrown far, far away, why does a drone sabotage the engines so the ship will explode? I mean, there's a difference between hanging up on a phone solicitor, and driving to that person's house and setting it on fire. The flames might be pretty and the screams from inside might sound like music, but there's gotta be, like, a *line*, y'know?

Honestly, I just don't think these super-smart, super-dead races really plan very well for what happens after they're gone. Like how some people don't make out a will when they really ought to, only here, it's creating crazy powerful death machines, which there really isn't ever an appropriate time for. At least the machine in "Survives" is basically constrained to a single location. In "The Lights of Zetar," we've got a giant glowing cloud of "desire" that floats around the vacuum looking for libraries to destroy. That's downright unneighborly, like killing all the local dogs because your landlord won't allow pets. Or something. (It's very, very late right now.)

In addition to its clear grudge against shiny, floating things, "Zetar" is a character episode, giving one of the secondary leads a connection to the plot that gives them more of an emotional investment in the story than they normally would have. Here, it's Scotty, who's in love with the very pleasant Lt. Mira Romaine. I've made some disparaging comments about Scotty in the past, but while I still find him much more appealing when he's in the grandfather mode of the movies, he wasn't really unpleasant or anything here. His relationship with Mira was the sort of vaguely condescending paternalism you'd expect from the show (yeah, yeah, I'm a bleeding heart prat, lemme alone), but she appeared to enjoy his presence, and it really only worked out to him being super-protective of her. Oh, and he let some of his duties drop, too, which seems to be a running theme on the show. I get that it makes for good (or at least, easy to write) drama, giving Scott a goal that may run counter to the needs of the rest of the cast, but it's terribly silly the way everyone on the *Enterprise* drops everything whenever their heart skips a beat. Unless it's arrhythmia, let's see some professionalism.

The *Enterprise* is bringing Romaine to a library planet so she can begin her first big assignment. While she and Scotty make googoo eyes at each other on the bridge, the ship runs into a big, sparkly cloud that throws everyone into a state of panic. Various crew-members suffer in different ways, and Spock comes to the conclusion that the cloud attacks different parts of the brain in each person. Poor Mira gets the brunt of it, though. When the cloud hits, she comes forward to the ship's view-screen, and when the camera pans to her face, it zooms directly into one of her eyes, for a shot that will get repeated throughout the episode. It's not revealed until much later, but the cloud has basically mind-melded with Mira, taking over a part of her brain before it, well, takes over the *rest* of her brain. She'll get some psychic flashes, Scotty will be worried, and then, in the end, she gets stuck in the pressure chamber.

Whoa, missed a step. Right—the cloud heads to the library planet that Kirk and the *Enterprise* were going to, only the cloud gets there first, and kills everybody in the facility. (We only see four or five dead people, so clearly they're dealing with budget problems.) The one person still alive when the landing party beams down is a woman who makes some very odd growling noises—the same noises Mira made after the cloud attacked earlier. So then there's a long deductive period as the cloud chases the ship, and Mira acts strangely, and Scott continues to be concerned. Finally, after comparing some brain wave patterns and asking a few pointed questions, our heroes realize what's happened, and also realize that the only way they can defeat the cloud is by giving it a chance to completely invade Mira, and then squeeze her in the chamber.

It's a risky play, but it goes off just fine, and Mira gets away so that she and Scotty can spend the rest of the time before the credits end together, frolicking and doing whatever it is one does when celebrating a successful emancipation from an other-worldly force. Which is nice for them, but good lord, what's going to happen the next time this, um, happens? The only reason the *Enterprise* survived this time is that the cloud managed to "bond" successfully with Mira. According to Mira's Zuul voice, the cloud has been searching for a compatible host for a very long time. So, if there are other clouds, and that's not that unlikely if you think about it, what'll happen when the *Enterprise*, or some other poor bastard's ship, stumbles across the Sparkle Motion Mystery Tour without an appropriate crew-member on board to take the fall? Mira wasn't even regular personnel.

What I'm getting at here is, well, neither of these episodes were exactly terrific. The info dump at the end of "Survives" amounts to character round-robinning their way through six or seven paragraphs of information, which is never good for a satisfying resolution, and "Zetar" has a mid-section slump, with a somewhat disappointing big reveal. But I like the bizarre implications both episodes lead to. And it makes you wonder, just what sort of impact *does* a civilization make when it dies? I'd say the odds are still in the not-entirely-promising area that humanity won't make it to the next millennium, and if our brief time upon the stage does end sooner rather than later, what horrible legacy will we leave behind? And will there be anyone for our lazy spirits to torment?

#### Grades:

"That Which Survives": B

"The Lights of Zetar": B-

#### Stray Observations:

- "Please, Mr. Scott, restrain your leaps of assumption."
- Hey, it's Dr. M'Benga again!
- He doesn't name it specifically, but I'm pretty sure Sulu mentioned the Tunguska Event of 1908.
- Next week, we'll be taking a look at "Requiem For Methuselah" and (ulp) "Way To Eden."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (99)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [DinoZack Handlen](#)  
2/12/10 11:42am

Quick note

Let me just say while I can still post up near the top of the comments—another fine article; I enjoy Zack's stuff more and more, and I swear it keeps getting better (I would be more authoritative about the perceived improvement, but frankly I'm not an authority, so let me say that as an unqualified observer, it seems that way to me).

I've said this a few times before, but I want to make s

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino

2/12/10 11:43am

Pardon, premature posting.

...make sure Zack knows I appreciate his work.

Thanks.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Dino

2/12/10 12:04pm

Yes

Thanks Zack

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Dino

2/12/10 12:49pm

Absolutely spot on observations, entertaining, and always with a fresh angle on episodes we've all watched over and over for years.

Highlight of my AV Club week, thanks again Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Dino

2/12/10 12:58pm

Definitely my highlight too.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Dino

2/12/10 1:01pm

Agreed.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Dino

2/12/10 1:03pm

It really makes me look forward to TNG coverage, especially when we get into the later seasons and the episodes get consistently good.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dino

2/12/10 1:29pm

yeah, no doubt. last week I found myself checking the episode list for season 3 of TOS to figure out the weeks before we move on.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dino

2/12/10 1:34pm

Agreed! I normally read these at work on a Friday at about 5-00pm CET when they get posted, with a glass of wine and a mellow approach to life, and Zach always shines. My favourite AV Club writer.

@Wingnut - agreed, although if poor Zach thinks S3 TOS is hard to get through good luck with Angel One... You take one for the team Zach!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)Dino

2/12/10 1:36pm

Thanks, everyone. :)

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino

2/12/10 3:30pm

Ooh, yeah, the Next Generation. I'm a bit giddy about that.

I didn't really need to watch the TOS episodes for the recaps 'cause I've seen every episode about a hundred times, having watched syndication steadily from age 4 or so on up to TNG premiering when I was in my late teens. Since I've only seen that series' episodes 5 or so times each, I should start planning out some sort of access to the episodes so I can watch along

Legal access, of course.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Dino

2/12/10 5:18pm

After that he can do DS9! Or at least the good seasons of DS9...

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Dino

2/12/10 5:32pm

Which, exactly, are the bad seasons of DS9? It's the only Trek without any truly horrible seasons.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Dino

2/12/10 6:15pm

I echo the praise for Zach here. I've even gotten to where I look forward to Friday's for this. (And I'd probably guess I'm not nearly as big a fan of Trek as most people here.) Thanks, Zach, and can't wait til we get into season 1 of TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Dino

2/12/10 6:40pm

I'm not a fan of the first couple seasons of DS9. By the end though it was my favorite Star Trek ever.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Dino

2/12/10 7:10pm

Thank you for these writeups, and thank you for getting me to watch this show again.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)Dino

2/13/10 9:10am

I just finished watching the first season of DS9 for the first time since it originally aired and I believe it has probably the best Trek/dreck ratio of any first season since TOS. Yeah, it's a bit uneven, but they already seem to know where they're going and a few episodes rank with the best of the franchise, especially 'Duet'.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Dino

2/13/10 5:49pm

Another vote for Zack.

I only wish I could figure out exactly when this goes up to be able to participate more fully in these little confabs he provokes;. I always end up clsing the joint!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dino

2/13/10 10:21pm

Usually mid-morning (mountain time) each Friday.

[Reply](#)

- [Anatole Barber](#)Dino

2/13/10 11:39pm

"...so what the hell, Kirk and a few of the guys beam down to check things out."

That's a pretty good description of Trek in general. Made me laugh, anyway.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

2/12/10 11:46am

Lost Purpose

I never tire of the sci fi trope of the robot or computer or whatever that outlived its creator and is still doing what it was told after all these years. ST probably did this best in TNG "Arsenal of Freedom" where a planet is a big weapons convention demonstration. There's just something about man doing something only for himself that far out lives him to the detriment of the world/galaxy/whatever that resonates.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/12/10 12:26pm

Ah, I posted about this below; I'd forgotten about that particular TNG episode. I also remember "Contagion," "Masks" and "The Chase" being basically the same sort of thing. "Contagion" was fun when I was a kid; "Masks" is a guilty pleasure because it's just so batshit.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/12/10 12:46pm

I do give the TNG cast credit- they go all out for whatever batshit script they have in front of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/12/10 12:53pm

Jeez, if you wanted to start mentioning all those dead society's computer episodes...I'm pretty sure TNG and Voyager beat that trope straight to death between the two of them.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 12:59pm

I never could stand Masks. While there were still plenty of good eps in S7, stinkers like that made me somewhat glad that was the last season.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:02pm

I thought WALL-E used this trope pretty well.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:37pm

Even Brent Spiner admits his performance in Masks is pretty lousy. "A masterclass of bad acting" I think is how he put it - erm, quite. It's not the S7 highlight, although it's by no means the worst episode of the last season. S7 also holds a special place for me because I believe it contains the only episode of TNG I have never seen.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:42pm

Let me guess. The worst S7 episode and the one you haven't seen are the same one. And it's Sub Rosa.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:52pm

Strangely no - although Sub Rosa is rubbish I think Force Of Nature (ohh, subtle environmental parallels!) and Homeward are worse (and that's not even mentioning Wesley's return). No the episode I've never seen is Bloodlines, because really, who needs to see another Ferengi episode?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 2:00pm

Bloodlines is lame but it's got tons of Picard, which automatically means it's at least OK. Sub Rosa is just aggressively dull and ridiculous.

[Reply](#)

- [pico79](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 2:28pm

Actually Bradbury did this best in "The Long Years".

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 3:38pm

Ugh to Sub Rosa.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/12/10 3:45pm

pico79: Or "There Will Come Soft Rains"?

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 7:07pm

Miyazaki's Castle in the Sky does great stuff with this trope.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/13/10 1:43am

Along the same lines: Civil Defence, in DS9. Combines that trope with the locked room archetype.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/13/10 9:49am

Chico: That was a great episode. Dukat calmly beaming in and ordering himself some red leaf tea while everybody huddles under cover in Ops was a classic moment. Especially when it leads to Garak and Dukat being bitchy to each other, which was always great.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/13/10 5:52pm

I always think about this trope when NASA goes on about these probes, landers, satellites, etc that have long outlived their expectations...  
also.. VGER, anyone?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/14/10 9:32am

Attention, Bajoran workers!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
2/12/10 11:50am

Next week

Surprising to me that Requiem and Eden were back to back. I really like Requiem and the notion of the lone, immortal working his way through time. Eden sucks ass.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 12:12pm

Eden holds up better than you think it will. Watched it a couple months ago, was very pleasantly surprised.

Requiem is the opposite. I really bought into the mystery of Flint as a kid, but now the show seems uber weak and kind of annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:03pm



"Way to Eden" is hysterical. I'd give it an A just for the campy laughs.

"Gonna clap my hands and jump for joy! I got a clean bill of health from Dr. McCoy!"

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:10pm

Maybe if you mute it when they're singing.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 1:11pm

I agree, Jim. I was on the "Eden"-hating bandwagon until I rewatched it a couple of years ago. It isn't great by any stretch, but I don't think it is as bad as "Spock's Brain." Take the space hippy songs out and it is basically an average episode.

"Requiem" isn't terrible either; like several other episodes, I find it somewhat forgettable. I always enjoy the ending where Spock makes Kirk "forget" (and how that contrasts with him making McCoy "remember" in ST:III). I think it is kind of neat and also shows in a strange way how Spock cares for Kirk. Even though it's basically a way to reset the status quo (which Trek usually just doesn't even bother to do from episode to episode).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 3:37pm

I think what bugs me most about Eden is that it isn't even real Space Hippies, but like the Jack Webb version of Space Hippies.

I'm sure you follow my meaning.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 4:42pm

I'll probably mention this again next week, but the guy who wrote "Requiem for Methusaleh," Jerome Bixby, also wrote the movie "The Man From Earth," which is essentially the same plot minus the Captain Kirk. Guess he just thought the whole immortal man lives through all of human history thing was just really neat, too.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 5:40pm

is that the one where Kirk gets all emo over the guy's daughter so Spock erases his memory of her? that pissed me off.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 7:01pm

Eden isn't that goofy. Standard hijack plot, and it's kind of rewarding at the end to see what happens to the hippies.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 8:42pm

As I've noted at TrekBBS, "The Way to Eden" can be construed as a response to the huge success of the then-new Broadway musical HAIR. It would not have been filmed as it was, with all the songs and songlets (in the uncut version), were it not for HAIR. (I was much exposed to the RCA original cast album when it came out, and also saw "Eden" on NBC the same year, but it took me a while to make the connection.)

As for "Requiem," I have always loved it. Flint has made himself into the Da Vinci of android-builders (after learning from his mistakes, which we're shown at the end of the third act). Kirk is smitten to the point of inappropriate behavior by what Flint has created. This means that Flint and Kirk must have a very great deal in common: Rayna was built to appeal to Flint only, and not as his "daughter" (even though Spock later concludes that she viewed him as a father); Flint would have no reason to build her to appeal to anyone else, even if he were able to do so. Yet Kirk too sees her as the ideal "woman."

Perhaps Flint, because of his thousands of years on Earth, had acquired a sort of universality in his appreciation of what a woman should be, to the point that any (hetero) human male crew member of the Enterprise would have reacted as Kirk did. (The only others she does meet are Spock, who doesn't count - and besides, he liked Droxine in "The Cloud Minders"! - and McCoy, who's preoccupied with the epidemic.)

Really, the episode is about Flint and his problem (becoming widowed a hundred times, and what to do about it) more than it's about Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/12/10 9:54pm

"the Jack Web version of Space hippies"

Yeah, my sister has been watching Dragnet reruns, network TV's idea of hippies was pretty silly.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/13/10 1:28am

The network's decision to throw their concept of Haight-Ashbury onto the Enterprise in "The Way To Eden" is enough to make you unplug your TV for a month, although the idea of Spock finally finding a bunch of musicians he can jam with is cool. Setting the awful music aside, it's a middle-of-the road third season episode. Severin's ears are super-freaky. And Chekov's ex-girlfriend is cute, which helps. But the songs (and the crew' groovin' to the beat) just kill it.

[Reply](#)

-  [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/13/10 7:25pm

"The Jack Webb version of hippies" is all-too accurate. I'm surprised no one has mentioned this before, but Gene Roddenberry, in addition to being an cop was the LAPD liaison to DRAGNET. The Jack Valenciennes (Kevin Spacey in the film) LA Confidential role is (loosely) based on him...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
2/12/10 11:17am

May I be the first?

To notice Zack's ratings are listed on Wikipedia's pages for some episodes?

Sorry

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 11:26am

Hopefully you will be mentioned as a famous victim on Wikipedia's cancer aids page.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 11:46am

Hey, if ZMF can be mentioned on the AVClub's page, I can dream

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 12:55pm

Heh, what fan actually thinks all the eps are stellar? The series is very hit or miss, and most of S3 is bad. You would think most trekkies would admit that...

[Reply](#)

- [zeppomarxist](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 1:01pm

Speaking of wikis, The Lights of Zetar is most memorable to me for providing the name for Memory Alpha, the Star Trek Wiki.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 1:02pm

I'm a hardcore Trek nerd, and I can admit it. If they can't then they have problems.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 1:27pm

Zach's clearly not being too hard on some of these episodes. He's generally been able to find something about each one of them to enjoy, even if in a fairly limited sense (for example praising the interactions between Spock and McCoy in "The Empath". Some people just have too much of their self-worth wrapped up in the things they enjoy and can't deal with criticism.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 2:41pm

In this case, he's definitely being far too generous, especially with "Zetar." A C- at best.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 3:32pm

I think this calls for a good ol' fashioned messageboard invasion! Ktotwf, I leave you in charge of the coordinated trolling.

[Reply](#)

- [Aqualad](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/12/10 5:16pm

El Santo speaks truth

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

2/12/10 5:57pm

Yes, the AV Club will annihilate these poor fools

This will be the first time that the AV Club (or any AV Club, for that matter) annihilates anything.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

2/13/10 1:38am

So, is wiki-Memory Alpha set to be wiped out by a giant internet cloud?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

2/13/10 4:25pm

Kudos to Zach, and I agree that he's often too indulgent, if anything (no Zetar fan, I).

I'm just chuffed he's going to keep going with Trek (poor bastard with the first 2 seasons of TNG!) I'm really looking forward to the next few years of discussing this stuff with you guys... (and gals..oops!) I prefer intelligent disagreement to sycophantic fan slavering, by light years...

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

2/14/10 5:07pm

The problem with these reviews isn't that they aren't sycophantic enough, it's that bad episodes regularly are better reviewed than good ones.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

2/12/10 11:23am

Scotty needs to speak to Starfleet HR

I thought "That Which Survives" was pretty great spookiness when I was a kid, I liked it for the same reasons rewatching it. Kirk not seducing/judo chopping his way out of a problem(with a hot girl x3?!) made it seem like he was really in a tight spot, especially with the ship too far out to save his bacon.

"Zetar", eh. Can't Starfleet HR have a talk with Scotty? He's harrassing the poor girl all over the ship, doesn't he have work to do in Engineering? It's not like it's the first time a "bonnie lass" got his ass in trouble (Wolf In The Fold).

Great write up once again Zach.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 11:40am

Also: Scotty has a drinking problem.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 11:48am

Hey, his drinking did help defeat the Andros

[Reply](#)

- [SnaitN](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 12:52pm

Scotty's drinking problem in the TNG ep was OUTSTANDING though! "It's.... green."

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 12:56pm

I'd characterize Scotty as a "functioning" alcoholic. After all, he's able to get them out of scrape after scrape.

Otherwise, it would be:

KIRK: "Scotty!! Three to beam up! Get us out of here!!"

MR. SCOTT: "I canna remember how to work the transporter! Does sliding the levers up beam people up? And whappens if they're in the wr-wrong position from a prevous, preblious, earlier beam?"

KIRK: ::dies::

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 1:32pm

Scotty doesn't have a drinking problem! Clearly you just don't know enough Scotsmen! \*volunteers for Drunk Scots Testing Program\* That's normal behavior where i come from pal (although to be fair, that's Glasgow).

Also, I'm drunk at work writing this...

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 2:55pm

On TNG, Scotty saves the Enterprise with a monumental hangover. If I get one of those, I mostly just puke and call in sick.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 3:37pm

Same here, Bad Horse. If anyone expects me to save the day after a night out on the town and one to many pints, then sorry. I'm good at around 6 PM, not before.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 4:12pm

Honestly, I'd bet McCoy keeps a secret bottle of whiskey in sick bay (for 'medicinal purposes') before I suspected Scotty of showing up drunk in engineering.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster

2/12/10 5:58pm

McCoy picks up Romulan ale from time to time, but again, only for medicinal purposes.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

2/13/10 5:47pm

I was only born in Scotland, and I'm still hungover...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Bart Fargo](#)Zack Handlen

2/12/10 12:12pm

"Zetar" Really Scared Me As A Kid...

The wierd gurgling noises, Romaine's pre-congition of death, the way the woman's face on Memory Alpha kept changing colors as she struggled to speak, that seemed like one of the only times someone on TV actually seemed to be really suffering. Usually an alien would make a red shirt guy vanish or collapse limply, but that orange-faced woman with the unearthly voice really looked like she had been in agony for a while. It still seems effective to me.

Finding out Shari Lewis co-wrote it somehow made it creepier still—like she had secretly wanted to scare children rather than just bore them.

It is odd hearing the word "girl" repeatedly used to describe calling a grown, professional woman with a command rank. Even the Zetar light people call her that!

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Bart Fargo

2/12/10 12:27pm

Shari Lewis as in the woman with the sheep hand puppet?

That's awesome. I never knew that before.

I saw her a while ago on a Man From U.N.C.L.E. episode, and was stunned by how hot she was.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Bart Fargo

2/12/10 4:46pm

Shari Lewis would also reportedly go out to restaurants and order lamb chops for dinner. Which still isn't enough to make her cooler than Mister Rogers, but it's certainly something.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Bart Fargo

2/13/10 1:30am

Scared me as a kid too. Very creepy.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Bart Fargo

2/13/10 1:31am

Ummm..."Zetar" not Shari Lewis. Shari Lewis, from the little I've seen, is merely vaguely annoying.

[Reply](#)

- [Bart Fargo](#)Bart Fargo

2/13/10 8:37am

I double and triple checked it—they even superimposed her face on the episode promo during a Star Trek marathon in the 1990s.

I'm talking about the Shari Lewis with the "lamb chop" puppet. It is a bit confusing since there's another actress whose name is similar and half the listings on the internet misspell her first name as "Sherri" (you can porbably find a few that misspell it as "Sherry") but I swear it's true!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bart Fargo  
2/13/10 12:04pm

<http://www.maryrobinettekow...>

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bart Fargo  
2/13/10 7:36pm

Well, I'd've said 'no' from that photo, and from the IMDB on Sheri Lewis and Lambchop (with Margaret Hamilton, the Wicked Witch of the West herself, as herself!), but this settles the issue:

<http://www.imdb.com/name/nm...>

Strangely, no Lambchop credits before '95?

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Bart Fargo  
2/13/10 11:56pm

I also thought the noise was creepy. I couldn't watch it even when I was 7 or 8.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
2/12/10 12:08pm

Eh

"Survives" is another example of a Trek episode that isn't great but isn't total (fun) shit, which, as I've said before, to me makes it worse. I had a hard time remembering this one until I rewatched it; I only remembered the women saying "I'm here for you" and killing guys by touching them. The overall premise at the end is a little silly to me...Also, how many times has Star Trek used the whole thing about a dead race leaving shit behind that either fucks things up or leads to some adventure? I know it happened in TNG at least three times.

"Zetar" slightly pisses me off, but it's still pretty average. The stuff with Scotty just made me feel uncomfortable watching it, though. Not "rapey" like Checkov, but still...

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God  
2/12/10 1:43pm

The rapey quota is fulfilled. We may now go about our business.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
2/12/10 3:39pm

I can almost hear The Great Luke Ski using it now

[Reply](#)

- [vandermonde](#)St. God  
2/12/10 11:09pm

I'll slay you like kirk; judo chop your neck off  
I'm drunker than Ccotty and rapey like chekhov

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
2/13/10 7:30pm

Gotta work the 'slay you'/'rapey' interior rhyme... try:

Slay you like Kirk off/chop your head with Klingon/  
kung fu you big jerk/ and I'm rapey like Chekov

r..smpin...

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen  
2/12/10 4:01pm

Spock the career XO?

"Spock's rationality looks best when he's observing human foolishness while someone else gives orders. When he's in authority, his insistence on pointing out how foolish everyone else is makes him hard to like; and honestly, I think that's cool."

I think one of the savvier bits of eps like this one and The Galileo Seven is that it shows you pretty clearly why Spock didn't have a meteoric rise to the captaincy like most Starfleet overachievers; he's the kind of officer that inspires a lot of respect from your average crewman, but not much loyalty. Pretty much anybody is willing to take a phaser burst for Kirk within moments of meeting him, but Spock's remoteness and pedantry keep him stuck in an XO position despite his considerable abilities.

TOS didn't really delve too much into the XO parts of his duties (except inasmuch as it meant he got the big chair when Kirk got himself lost or hurt), but can you imagine having Spock do your performance review? A terrifying prospect. Hard-ass XOs are nothing new, of course, because they allow the captain to be the good cop, but you can see why Spock's personality fits more naturally into that role than a rally-'round-the-flag leadership position like Kirk's.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Ajax  
2/12/10 7:03pm

Yes.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Ajax  
2/13/10 7:38pm

I like that it just shows that each side of the Krk/Spock/McCoy triangle is in it's place for a reason: Yo don't want Kirk operating (in the medical sense, ladies, and some of you laddies) on you, McCoy analyzing nor Spock leading the charge...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax  
2/19/10 11:08am

This is a nice bit of analysis. But I think it reflects some of the later evolution of the character, vs how the character started. Think of Spock in some of the very early episodes: barking out orders in The Corbomite Maneuver, or his intense focus on leadership and command in Enemy Within. That Spock would ascend to captaincy in a very competent way. As the show went on they (writers/producers/Nimoy) moved the character in a certain direction, and he became more remote and pedantic in these situations where he was in command. But he didn't start that way.

I've always thought that it was bizarre, and became more bizarre in later seasons, how people responded to Spock in command when Kirk was out of reach. Why would anyone, esp McCoy, yell at Spock? Hadn't Spock earned some cred by that point?



Here's another angle on Spock in command. Remember in The Immunity Syndrome, the starship that bought it was crewed almost entirely by Vulcans? If there are ships like that in Starfleet, then Spock would make a very able captain of one.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

2/13/10 4:17pm

Professionalism vs Going Native

Boy, I really see what you mean about people dropping their responsibilities everytime a pretty person comes into view, but I think it's part and parcel of the original conception of the show, the whole 'Horatio Hornblower thing..

I think Roddenberry had an idea of these guys (and, in a too-often secondary thought, gals) being gone for so long that they were deprived of human contact (doubtless why the TNG generation of Starfleet let families come along)...

The model is like 'Bounty' era british vessels:

There was a constant danger of the crew 'going native'... It was just nicer.

Duty and discipline were therefore ramped up, to the point of being impossible, just to inhibit any shirking..

Thus, when discipline tended to go.. boy did it!

That said, I think this presents both dramatic possibilities (the whole idea) and pitfalls (overuse, as you point out, amongst others, including painting our heroes as irresponsible and Starfleet as a bunch of prigs ruling over borderline insubordinates..)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Richelieu Jr

2/13/10 10:26pm

That's an apt comparison, I think. I remember reading that one of the key premises to the series was that they were operating so far out on the frontier that they would not be able to communicate on a tactical level with starfleet headquarters, so Kirk would find himself having to make decisions on his own. one of the nicer things about TOS compared to TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)Zack Handlen

2/15/10 10:41am

Scotty

Always showed himself to be the most competent non-Kirk commander of the Enterprise, IMO.

[Reply](#)

- [Strange\\_Bundle](#)Zack Handlen

2/12/10 3:34pm

Yes, I pay attention.

Notice that you said Dr. M'Benga was there and gone the last time? Ha!

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen

3/25/14 9:25pm

Scotty sure turns into a lovesick schoolboy whenever a pretty woman is around

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "Requiem For Methuselah"/"Way To Eden"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 19, 2010

[Comments \(184\)](#)



I wouldn't mind living forever. Despite all those *Twilight Zone* episodes about the dreariness of immortality, I, personally, would be willing to take the risk of boredom and despair ten thousand years down the line, if that meant not having to be dead. I imagine most people would. Generally, fiction that deals with excessively long life tries to convince us that this is the wrong choice. You have the occasional pro-immortality piece (I always thought Neil Gaiman had the right idea of it in *Sandman*: no major revelations, just existence prolonged with all its minor triumphs and loss), but mostly, writers are heavily invested in convincing us that death is natural and therefore desirable. Maybe undertakers have a very strong lobby, I dunno, but "natural" to my way of thinking doesn't invariably mean "necessary."

"Requiem For Methuselah" would disagree with this. Well, all right, it's a fifty minute episode of a forty years gone television show, it doesn't really get much in the way of active verb sentences. But the seemingly immortal Flint has definitely developed some issues as a result of being kept long past his expiration date. He bought a planet (I love how casually this is mentioned, as if buying planets that could support life were the sort of thing you'd expect from any reasonably well-off gentleman) just so he could avoid the company of others, and when Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam down, he's not very happy about the surprise visit. The *Enterprise* has caught a bad case of Rigelian fever, and they're short on ryetalyn, the only known cure. Thankfully, Flint's planet is loaded with the stuff, and after some very heated debating, he gives in to their demands and offers to send his robot probe, M-4, to collect the plague-stopping chemical while the others come back to Flint's place and, y'know, hang out and stuff.

For an apparent hermit with no recorded history, Flint's amassed an impressive art collection, from a series of unknown Da Vinci's painted on modern canvases with modern materials, to a new Brahms' waltz written in fresh ink. But the jewel of his collection is a young woman named Rayna. Cultured, beautiful, intelligent, and charmingly naive, Rayna makes an immediate impression Kirk, and she on him. So, while the rest of his crew on the ship is battling sickness and waiting desperately for a cure, Kirk starts seducing the ward of his barely tolerant host. Spock's getting suspicious, though. What's with all the fresh/old art? And his suspicions are confirmed when McCoy's sensor reading on Flint reveals Flint to be somewhere in the area of really, really old.

There was discussion last week about my "soft" grading for this season of *Trek*, and I won't deny that. I'm not trying to create some kind of textbook perfect scale here. Unless an episode is particularly horrible or particularly good, I'm more interested in working out the oddities and making cheap jokes. I start each ep assuming it's in the B/B+ area, and then adjust accordingly. So "Requiem" started off okay for me. There's a certain level of improbability you have to swallow here, that the *Enterprise* would get hit by a virus that gives them a very specific timetable to survive, and that the only cure for that virus would be found in substantial quantities on a nearby planet that just happens to have a human immortal who just happened to have been born on Earth. A less charitable person than myself would also point out that the Rigelian subplot is the worst kind of MacGuffin, one that seems deathly important when first introduced but becomes arbitrary and perfunctory as soon as is deemed narratively convenient.

I'm willing to look past that, though, especially in the third season. But "Requiem" kept disrespecting my goodwill. Again we have an episode where the audience is always a few steps ahead of the cast, and those few times it did manage to surprise me where more ridiculous than thrilling. That Flint just happens to have been Leonard Da Vinci and Brahms and a bunch of other famous guys is absurd, and needless, especially considering his explanation about how he had to learn quickly to not let his "special" nature become public. Right, so you live forever, and the best way to conceal that is to keep being insanely famous and influential. Some super genius. Also, for someone who's spent such a terribly long time watching people be people, he doesn't really understand humans very well. (Tip: Ordering someone who doesn't like you like that to stop caring for another man will *never* work out in your favor.)

Not to mention the ridiculously blase explanation for his immortality—apparently, he's just really good at healing. That's it. I'm a little torn on this one, because it's so bald-faced and unconcerned that I kind of like it. When there's no possible reasonable explanation for a situation, bluffing can work as well in fiction as it can in poker, depending on how straight-faced it's delivered. That neither Kirk, McCoy, nor Spock question this discovery goes a long way towards making it work. Still, it seems like a lost opportunity for something more clever than "I was born this way." (Admittedly, the episode justifies Flint's extraordinary abilities as a result of his longevity, but I'm not sure I'm buying. Bill Murray was a pretty great piano player after all those Groundhog Day lessons, but he wasn't a master composer just because he had a lot more time on his hands.)

What really killed "Requiem" for me, apart from Flint's inconsistencies and the story's familiar *Forbidden Planet* parallels, was how much it had to betray Kirk's essential nature in order to justify its story. We've seen Kirk falling for beautiful women, and them falling for him in turn. You can make jokes about it, but it's an established element of the show's mythology. But here, we're supposed to believe that Kirk is so instantly and irrevocably smitten with Rayna (an android Flint built to be the perfect woman) that he's willing to put his ship and the lives of everyone aboard at risk. Despite Spock's repeated warnings, Kirk flirts with Rayna, pursues her, and then demands she leave with them, because he can't bear to see how Flint treats her. He's known this girl less than four hours, and he's so blinded by love (to put it charitably) that he loses the sense of duty that has been his strongest single characteristic since the first episode? I'm not buying that.

And it's too bad, because as others have noted, the final scene could've been moving if it had had a stronger foundation to rest on. Spock uses his mental powers to erase Kirk's memory of Rayna, sort of a one-time only Lacuna, Inc. treatment. It's a beautiful idea—Spock's outsider status doesn't just mean making snappy comments and having to clean up after the stupidity of his co-workers, it also gives him the responsibility of total observation, of holding onto memories that others would rather let go. McCoy lectures him on his inability to feel love, but that final gesture is definitive proof otherwise. (As if we needed it.) Were it not for the absurdity of Kirk's grief, this could've been a series highlight. Instead, it's a brief blip in an otherwise forgettable ep.

Still, forgettable isn't necessarily the worst thing. At least there aren't any space hippies. "The Way To Eden" is one of the notorious season three episodes that's hard to view straight, partly because it's been a punch-line for *Trek* fans for years, and partly because SPACE HIPPIES. It's gets ugly when popular culture tries to address a sub-culture it doesn't entirely understand. Regular hippies can be annoying enough, but the goofy nutjobs we see here are like a photocopy of a parody of an idea. A really tedious idea that keeps *singing*. Oh man. I was doing okay until the songs started happening. That about killed me.

"Eden"'s premise should be familiar to anyone who's seen *Star Trek V*. (Yeah, seriously, if that doesn't give you a chill, you are made of stone. Or else you haven't actually seen *Star Trek V*, which means you are made of something

significantly smarter than stone.) A small cult of true believers gets on the *Enterprise*—Kirk has to treat them well because one of them is the son of an ambassador—and that cult is determined to use the ship to help them on their quest. They're disillusioned with modern life, with all its computers and sterility and insistence on bathing, and they're trying to find their way back to where it all started, the very first planet, Eden.

Given how generally perfect the future of *Star Trek* seems to be, I will give "Eden" this much: it gives us a dissenting voice in Utopia. That that voice comes out from the touring cast of *Hair* damages its credibility somewhat, but the fact that Spock adds his support is hard to ignore. Spock has always been the sanest person on the ship, and to have him come out in favor of a bunch of trippy sland spouting airheads creates an odd dramatic tension. We see Dr. Sevrin and his motley band of morons babbling along, and then we hear Spock calmly defending their cause, and suddenly, you've got to take the dolts seriously. Obviously they have problems, and their dress sense could use some work (but then, it's not like freaky costumes are a rarity on the show), but maybe there's something to their yearning for a new beginning, a freer, purer home. Maybe they *aren't* just a group of spoiled morons who use the pretense of idealism in order to distract from their essential wounded selfishness.

Still, there is all that singing. (From character actor Charles Napier! Playing an instrument that in no way could make the sounds it's supposed to be making.) While I appreciate the contrast between the space hippies appearance and Spock's calm, rational assessment of their goal, the group is too strange and irritating for me to view them sympathetically. Kirk is stuck as the straight man for once, as none of the hippie girls fall for him, and as funny as it is to hear people call him Herbert, we're firmly in Kirk's corner. Plus, even Spock admits that Sevrin is insane. He's a carrier of a virus that could kill the perfect world he yearns for, and he refuses to accept this. Kirk throws him in the brig, but the hippies spring into action, distracting and seducing the crew, and ultimately stealing the *Enterprise* so they can find their way to their precious destination.

The crew seduction never goes anywhere; even Chekov is able to resist his old girlfriend's advances. Sevrin has to knock everybody out with a sonic device that should be fatal, only Kirk is just too badass to die. It's all a set-up for one of other parts of "Eden" I honestly liked: the hippies steal a shuttlecraft to visit their new home, and it nearly kills them. All the vegetation is poisonous and highly acidic. Nothing can be touched, nothing can be eaten. Spock tells the surviving cultists that he hopes they continue their search, but I like to think that this place really was Eden, and that when God kicked Adam and Eve out the door, He made damn sure they wouldn't be able to sneak back in.

Really, I would've been a lot more patient with this one if it weren't for the songs. The action stops cold every time Napier picks up his whatever-the-hell-it-is and starts warbling. I think Sevrin's quest is foolishly naive, and the condescending emptiness of his followers is nearly intolerable, but at least those have something to do with a story. At least all the "Herbert" crap has a point. The singing is just the worst kind of padding, and it burns more than a few Edenic bushes ever could.

#### **Grades:**

**"Requiem For Methuselah": C**

**"The Way To Eden": C-**

#### **Stray Observations:**

- "That's now, that's the real now!" Ahh, it's like poetry.
- I did like the explanation that Flint was already dying when Kirk and the others met him. It explains why he looked fairly old for somebody with perfect cellular regeneration.
- Irina tells Chekov, "Be incorrect... occasionally." Oh sister, he is way, way ahead of you.
- So, how about you—you wanna live forever?
- Next week, it's "The Cloud Minders" and "The Savage Curtain"

#### **DISCUSSION**

- Community (184)
- Pending

Sort by:

## Popular

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 2:41pm

Why do we love it?

We are heading into the last couple weeks of Zack's reviews. TOS is almost over. (Again.) I had hoped we could touch on this question while commenting on the final few episodes. Why do we love it?

Especially in the context of season 3, which is often bad. We accused Zack of grade creep last week, in the comments about That Which Survives and Lights of Zetar. Zack retorts above:

"There was discussion last week about my 'soft' grading for this season of Trek, and I won't deny that. ... I start each ep assuming it's in the B/B+ area, and then adjust accordingly. "

I'm sympathetic to this. Even the most awful episodes, I'm not sure I want to see them get an F.

So here we have two episodes that are, well, not good. In the midst of a long string of episodes that by and large are pretty bad. It's a depressing season. And yet, I love it so much. If I were flipping channels and saw one of these annoying episodes — Requiem, or Zetar, or Gideon, or Wink of an Eye — I would certainly settle down and watch it. (Maybe not Empath or Savage Curtain)

We love Star Trek, as a series (and I mean TOS), far beyond the merits of the individual episodes. How is that possible? What is it that we love?

### [Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 2:59pm

1) Nostalgia. Nothing reminds me of my childhood like watching Star Trek reruns, and seeing the movies on the big screen. The first (shut up) movie I remember seeing as a kid was Khan (I was 6), and this was a family that didn't go to movies. Plus, the shows themselves are so nostalgia-y: bright colors, crazy music, overacting.

2) Space. Seriously. Space is awesome, and how much better was TOS than, say 2001? (From an awesomeness standpoint- not from a cerebral "lets think about this" standpoint).

3) Sci Fi. Not fantasy. I've seen Star Wars more times than I can count, but its not "real". Its old, and new, and fake. Star Trek is the future, and I can't wait to get my jet pack.

4) Kirk and the gang. The people made it. Shatner was terrible on TJ Hooker, but perfect here. Same with Nimoy and Doohan and even Nichols. Characters that were not just a representative of their appropriate archetype (crotchety doctor, etc) but who brought something to the archetype.

5) Fisticuffs! Despite all the technology, and the weird aliens and the strange goings on, when it was time to get down to business, Shatner did a drop roll and came up swinging.

There's more, but I'll start here.

### [Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 3:44pm

It'll obviously vary person to person, but for me it is probably a combination of things. First it is because when I was little, starting probably when I was like 5, my dad would tape the re-runs, which came on at 11:00pm, and I'd watch them the next day. My dad liked the show, but wasn't really a \*fan\* fan, and he couldn't stand shows meant for kids, so he basically had me watch stuff like this that would be okay for me but that he could stand. So there's that element.

Besides that, I just like sci-fi. Star Trek, actually, might be responsible in some part for that. But I've also always liked the sci-fi that is less fantasy, in that I don't care for Star Wars at all (please don't hurt me) and things like LOTR, I just can't get into or like. Star Trek is basically futuristic sci-fi, at times what I guess we might call "hard sci-fi".

Also, the characters. Specifically the relationship between the "main" three, and in the later stuff, the way the secondary characters were fleshed out.

Also, many TOS episodes have decent stories, and especially for a young kid, makes one think. Even now, there are episodes and/or moments in episodes that remind me or make me think, which is always great. Other times, it is simply fun.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 3:57pm

"2) Space. Seriously. Space is awesome,"

Yup. "To seek out and explore new life and new civilizations". Even if new civilizations are really just Romans with TVs, that's still pretty awesome. Nearly every episode, Kirk and co. encounter something that is new not only to us but to them. Very few TV shows have actually done anything like this. It's an aspect that my other favorite sf shows (BSG, Firefly) lack.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 4:13pm

These are good lists.

Zack, when this series is wrapped up, and before you jump into TNG, is there room in the schedule for one column on TOS as a whole? I would love to see a retrospective of some kind. An overview, or whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 4:30pm

I do enjoy fisticuffs, but I will say that the fight choreography in TOS is cringe-inducing at times. If Kirk's not taking people down with the same instant-KO judo chop that was mocked in a Flintstones episode, he's flailing about with awkward side kicks or just grabbing people and shaking them into submission.

One of my friends says that all fight choreography on American TV was terrible until they brought the Japanese in to do it, and there are times I think he's got the truth of it.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 4:36pm

I'd go with nostalgia for me: the early syndication of TOS was what got me into Sci-Fi in the first place.

Because when I re-watched these eps a couple of years ago, some of them were pretty brutal.

Oh and Spock. After 40 years, we forget just what an sui generis TV character he remains. Nimoy gave — gives! — him sooo much soul.

As far as the grades go, my sister (who is such a hardcore, she defends the first movie, for chrissakes) and I were having the discussion about Zack's grading, and we agreed that what we really liked about his writeups was how he wasn't looking at even S3 with jaded, snarky eyes.

I like that, because it means he's finding nuances I would dismiss.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 4:40pm

The Motionless Picture is defensible, but it's way out of sync with Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 6:30pm

I second the idea of pausing before TNG and looking back on the original Star Trek as a whole. David Gerrold's book *The World of Star Trek* (Ballantine, 1973) was an intelligent look back on the series; the last quarter of the book involves what he would have done differently if given the chance. For example, far too many stories were about Kirk In Danger, hence Gerrold's idea of the "away team" with the captain remaining on the ship - an idea that finally was realized 14 years later with TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 7:45pm

"To boldly go where no man has gone before."

That's what Star Trek was doing. No one had produced a TV show like this before. Looking back there are things that could have been done better. But that's what happens when you're blazing a trail, you make mistakes. What makes Star Trek work is they faced the void and went for it.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 9:34pm

I agree with pretty much all of the above (including, but not limited to, the idea of Zach giving us a rundown of the whole shebang)..

I started watching Trek with my father who would share his clam chowder and Coke with me and put up with my constant questions of "What's Mr Spark gonna do now, Daddy?.." So on some level it's possibly an attempt to regain my youth...

Plus there's an inimitable optimism which is perhaps the one this we can all agree the other Trek series did get right...

And yes, the Final Frontier and the Ideas... even when it's as stupid as guys who are black or white on the wrong side, it's still almost always about SOMETHING...

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)JimZipCode  
2/20/10 12:46am

Kirk's favorite move is to jump through the air and kick a guy in the chest with both feet.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)JimZipCode  
2/20/10 11:49am

I agree with the nostalgia angle. Just yesterday I went to pick up my son from my parent's house, and he was watching the Search for Spock with my dad (on the same VHS tape we watched back in the 80's no less!). It reminded me of how my dad had to go out and rent TSFS the next day after he showed us TWOK, because my brother and I were upset by Spock's death. I was in a hurry to get home, but I couldn't resist sticking around to see the "noooo - Genesis is planet restricted!" scene.



But there's got to be more to it than that, because ST obviously had a huge impact on its initial generation without the nostalgia factor. There's something there that simply captures the imagination - I can see it in the way that my son watches it and the questions he asks (lots of "what's going to happen now like Richelieu mentions"). I think it's partially the optimism, but mostly the endless possibilities. The idea that Kirk and the Enterprise are willingly flying around the universe, running into unknown types of ridiculous shit, and dealing with it without breaking a sweat is pretty appealing. And the fact that it's set in our future, with technology that is at least somewhat plausible makes it more relatable than stuff like Star Wars (which always took a back seat to ST for me). Imagining that you might grow up to fly around outer space is not too much more far-fetched than, say, playing in the Superbowl.

[Reply](#)

- [meyerJimZipCode](#)  
2/20/10 7:18pm

JimZipCode- That's an excellent question that's already prompted some very good responses. Here's my take:

Nostalgia is probably the biggest factor for me. My Dad was a fan from the original run, and it became a huge part of my childhood just a few years later in its original syndication run, before I was even 10 years old - the age when every kid has an obsession or two and when most adults and other kids are willing to humor them. And it speaks to the show's strengths that no other TV show or movie or book grabbed my attention in the same way. But even with the nostalgia factor, I continued tuning in to the seemingly never-ending reruns for several reasons, I think.

The three lead actors and characters were a perfect match. They sell the dialogue - no matter how ridiculous the situation or chatter (or set or props), you at least believe that characters believe in it. As bizarre an actor as Shatner is, we like and respect and root for Kirk even when he's being a complete idiot. And Nimoy's acting probably does more than anything to lift the whole show to a higher level - Spock holds his dignity and our sympathies throughout and is an anchor of the show. These characters (and their crew) are flawed and conflicted, which at least makes them interesting and at best lets many of the stories center on real people. And they did a nice job of interspersing "big (if unsavory) ideas" among the plot-driven adventure stories. And, hey, fistfights and warp-speed battles are fun too.

And the ship itself seemed like a real place - a world that would be a lot of fun to hang out in. Dazzling colors everywhere, futuristic machines, and you don't even have to understand the geography - the turbolift takes you where you need to go. The music is a cut above too and so recognizable that it's been referenced and spoofed over and over again in pop culture. Not to mention a parade of leggy women in miniskirts and go-go boots (or this week's alien equivalent).

For better or worse, TNG veered sharply away from this approach, and it and all the following versions of Star Trek failed to capture the magic of the original show ("Khan" being the only exception). It'll still be interesting to read the TNG reviews, though.

[Reply](#)

- [alurinJimZipCode](#)  
2/21/10 4:12pm

I think there are two key differences between TOS and TNG. First, TOS tended to focus on the trinity of Kirk, Spock, and McCoy, while TNG tended to diffuse things out among a larger ensemble cast, except it wasn't really telling ensemble drama stories. Second, the relationships were all more or less the same on TNG. Everyone was friends with everyone else. Whereas on TOS, you have very different relationships between Kirk and Spock, Kirk and McCoy, and Spock and McCoy. This is why TNG felt so bland. Well, that and the 80s hotel lobby decor of the Enterprise-D!

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. DarkeJimZipCode](#)  
2/22/10 4:00am



It's more than nostalgia for me - I was a kid when TOS was originally on, and I remember how incredibly groundbreaking it was for the time. A \*United\* Starship with a crew that wasn't all white guys with one token Hot Chick! A man that my Aunt swore was The Devil was Second-in-Command, and super-smart to boot! The Japanese helmsman didn't speak silly brokin Engrish and did his job really well, as did the really sexy Black woman Communications Officer in the really REALLY skimpy micro-minidress! (Sulu and Uhura probably did as much for civil rights as a hundred protest marches - and I wonder how different the world would be now if Takei had been out back then.)

Also, laughable as "Devil in the Dark", "Mirror Mirror" and "Let This Be Your Last Battlefield" are now, at the time the idea of a Big Scary Monster that's actually a sympathetic character fighting for its children, an alternate Universe where all your heroes are really evil, and two guys who are black on opposite sides fighting to the death on a dying world because they can't stop hating seemed very deep for Sixties series television. Somehow, the TWILIGHT ZONE and OUTER LIMITS stories that dealt with similar themes didn't stick with me then as strongly as seeing Kirk, Spock, McCoy et al having to deal with these problems did - and yeah, Spock w/a goatee looked deadly and totally awesome!

Now, the social assumptions the series made strike us as badly outdated - and some of Spock's and McCoy's arguments sound decidedly racist. But during the late Sixties, STAR TREK was genuinely innovative and even surprisingly progressive - though it never went as far as Harlan Ellison would have liked it to, it went further than any other producer at the time dared.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)JimZipCode  
2/22/10 8:20am

Wait, is Devil In The Dark laughable? I think it's a terrific episode!

What I love about Star Trek, and TV sci-fi (or telefantasy or whatever it's being called this week) is the breadth of its scope and imagination. The universe that TOS was heading out into really DOES seem limitless, and one of the strengths of TOS, I think, is that even with knowledge of the future of DS9, TNG and Voyager, that feeling of limitlessness doesn't seem in any way diminished. That's a real testament to the strength of the show and its real commitment to its own premise. And the fact that we can all laugh at Space Hippies, remote-control Spock or Space Lincoln and STILL love it, well that moves it from a good show to a GREAT show. And I totally agree with meyer (and the rest) - the cast may not be the best actors ever, but they are the BEST for this show - it all hinges on whether we can take Shatner, Nimoy et al serious, and (mostly) we can - they sell the concept, and that is crucial. Further up, on a different thread, I said I thought Enterprise was the most miscast of the Treks - by contrast TOS is unquestionably the best-cast.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode  
2/22/10 8:10pm

@drdarkeny -Prole is right, "Devil in the Dark" and "Mirror, Mirror" are terrific. But your other points are good ones. Context is important and a future world where ethnicity wasn't an issue but was still be something to be proud of (Scotty, Chekov, Uhura, Sulu, and O'Reily all bring it up) was groundbreaking.

There's a funny but indefensibly racist joke I've heard about "Why aren't there any [\*insert ethnic group here\*] on the Enterprise?" The answer: "Because Star Trek takes place in the FUTURE."

@alurin - Yep, the TNG Enterprise is the dumbest and least cool-looking ship imaginable. The entire production design for that show was ill-conceived. And don't get me started on the "who's the producer with the forehead fetish?" question.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode

2/23/10 2:11pm

"Devil in the Dark" and "Mirror, Mirror" are among the all-time greats.

My theory is that part of the problem with TNG is that Roddenberry was trying to recapture the elements that had made TOS great. One of these elements is clearly the diversity of the cast, the "non-issue" of ethnicity in the future. However, Roddenberry simply wasn't any more progressive in the 90s than he was in the 60s. So while TNG is marginally more feminist than TOS (no miniskirts, and Tasha Yar does more than answer the phone), it doesn't really break any ground. Instead of demonstrating a future where humans had overcome the conflicts of today, he went for a future where humans had overcome conflict, period. I don't think anyone ever found the lack of interpersonal conflict on TNG as inspiring as the presence of Uhura, Sulu, and Chekov in TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode  
2/23/10 6:52pm

@alurin - You're dead right, and you put it well. The lack of conflict among the crew was just... boring. If I remember, Tasha Yar was a bit of a loose cannon, but mostly just came across as a bitch. I did like Picard (Stewart has real charisma and acting chops, after all), but the rest of the cast was bland. They had a good idea reversing the Spock personality in the character of Data, but fumbled it by making him comic relief.

How much control did Roddenberry have over the show at first? I always understood that he was credited as some kind of producer and that was about it.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
2/24/10 11:55am

I was under the impression that Roddenberry had a strong hand in the first season. The notes for "Conspiracy", for example, suggest that it was Roddenberry's objections that torpedoed the idea of an internal Starfleet coup and replaced it with the parasites.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
2/25/10 10:35pm

In fact, they even had the guys in the miniskirts for the first season, as I recall...

Also 'DITD' and 'MM' are truly great. 'Devil' was one of the first ones I showed to my girlfriend to convince her (ands she DOES like the show, but less then 'Enterprise')... Unfortunatel 'HOrta' is now her name for any unconvincing costume or prop... SHe dissolves in laughter each time she says it... Oh well...

BTW, that 'Joanna' site says that the Hiorta was originally on 'Outer Limits'! Who knew?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
2/26/10 10:08am

By the way, have you read the FAQ on the "Joana" site? That guy has a serious stick up his ass.

[Reply](#)

- Hide replies
- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 11:17am

## Explanations

"I'm a little torn on this one, because it's so bald-faced and unconcerned that I kind of like it. When there's no possible reasonable explanation for a situation, bluffing can work as well in fiction as it can in poker, depending on how straight-faced it's delivered."

Ah, yes. The Doctor Who principle. I actually prefer this to a lot of the technobullshit you see on later Trek series.

### [Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 11:20am

"Reverse the polarity!"

### [Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:10pm

I've always wondered what the "OSD" from the OSD conduits stood for.

### [Reply](#)

- [Trurl](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:19pm

Unicorn power converters fell out of favour because of intense PETA campaigning - "People for the Ethical Treatment of Aliens". Which brings us back to "Way to Eden".

### [Reply](#)

- [Poor Poor Bob](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:21pm

I rented Caged Heat 3000 (or something like that) for some ironic viewing and later unironic masturbation. In an early scene, the two busy heroines had to escape from their cage. The smarter of the two used her manacles to "reverse the polarity" of the lock. Gotta say, I got a bigger laugh out of that line than the movie deserved.

### [Reply](#)

- [SnaitN](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:29pm

Unicorn power converters power my pontoon boat in the summers. Well, that and Tachyons. God, I love tachyons, they're in every scifi show/movie ever.

### [Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:47pm

Sour the milk

### [Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:52pm

Usually on the show, they came up with a complicated plan, then explained it with a simple analogy.

Hmmm... If we can re-route engine power through the primary weapons and configure them to Melllvar's frequency, that should overload his electro-quantum structure.

Like putting too much air in a balloon!

### [Reply](#)

- [jeffstag](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 12:55pm

get with the times man! Tachyons are soooo last decade (was that the 90's, or are we officially in the teens now?). My pontoon boat is powered by Nanobots ! Of course, if you insist on being "Old Skool" you need an Atomic Powered Pontoon Boat, or really old school and have an Pontoon Boat Zeppelin, everything was zeppelin powered back in the old pulp sci-fir future...(I think I'm lost track of my original point...did I have one?..why am I in the kitchen?)

[Reply](#)

- [Harbinger of the Arockalypse](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:08pm

Like a balloon and something bad happens!

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:14pm

Reversing the polarity of the neutron flow solves everything.

Saying "reverse the polarity of the neutron flow" makes you a geek.

Botching the line, pausing, saying "Hm!" a few times, stuttering, and then re-saying the phrase really quickly to simply get it out makes you the First Doctor. And anachronistic.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:17pm

Change the frequency of the deflector shield!

[Reply](#)

- [Chief Engineer](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:17pm

As long as you've got some spare tachyons and a deflector dish to channel them through, you'll be just fine.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:23pm

Whatever you do, don't forget to divert subspace through the deflector dish.

I like Bad Horse's example, and will add that it's worse when it's a uniquely Now something, for instance Geordi saying "this things gotta have a tailpipe!" or that JAG woman saying "Data is a toaster!" (possibly influencing BSG?).

I mean, a balloon is simple enough to be kind of timeless, but tailpipes & toasters seem to require establishing a shared interest in archaic technology (such as Paris & Kim had, for instance).

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
2/19/10 1:31pm

Then you fall into that trap where they still make the Now analogy but they always feel the need to preface it like "Data is one of those ancient Earth devices used for heating and carbonizing bread. What was that called? Oh right, a toaster." I hate that even more.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 1:39pm

Simply saying "reverse the polarity of the neutron flow" doesn't make you a geek. What makes you a geek is pointing out that neutrons don't have a charge to reverse.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 2:01pm

Well, now wait a minute-

The Heisenberg Compensators was probably the best TNG use of "Tech" in that it addressed a real problem and hinted toward the actual solution. If there were such a thing as a transporter, and if you had to deassemble and reassemble molecules just so, the Uncertainty Principle creates a real barrier to entry (as does computing power, but THE FUTURE has it in spades), so voila! Heisenberg Compensators.

So much better than "Tachyon Fields" or "Chronoton Particles" or "Flux Capacitors" or whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 2:26pm

If I remember my physics correctly, tachyons are only theoretical particles that have negative mass. Chronotons are completely made up (I guess they're the particles that represent time? I guess time is both wave and particle-based, like light. Hmm...doubtful.) I always preferred it when Treknobabble used actual things (like muons and positrons) in its explanations.

[Reply](#)

- [Cheese](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 4:27pm

I'm done reconfoobling the energy-mo-tron...or whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 4:54pm

It was Uhura who said "the thing's gotta have a tailpipe," not Geordi.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 6:15pm

Wow, you're right. But I can see it! In my brains!!!

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 7:50pm

"Change the frequency of the deflector shield! "

Hey - YOU KNOW that when they started rotating shield frequencies to fight the Borg, you SQEE'd just like the rest of us.

I love techobabble. It's an art unto itself. It has to sound believable, yet urgent, like they're guessing. And then you have to get actors to say it. Good luck with that.

[Reply](#)

- [PancakeLad](#)Bad Horse

2/19/10 8:12pm

non sci-fi, but I always enjoy on NCIS when McGee does something to a computer. It's pure technobabble.

[Reply](#)

- [90.1](#)Bad Horse  
2/20/10 10:21am

Sir, it is none of your business when or where I SQUEE.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Bad Horse  
2/21/10 12:27am

Hola! Throw some coal in the boiler to raise steam for...The Difference Engine!

I always thought "chronoton particles" were kind of awesome as a dodgem for how time travel seemed so commonplace in the TREK universe. Though I loved it even more in DS9 when Chief O'Brien is arguing with his six-hours-in-the-future self about how they could possibly be occupying the same point in time-space - then both sigh in exasperation and mutter, "I HATE temporal mechanics!"

And let's not forget that, by the time of TNG, the characters were calling the compact high-tech ducts crisscrossing Federation starships "Jefferies Tubes" - which was originally an inside joke about TOS production designer "Matt" Jefferies.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Bad Horse  
2/21/10 10:03am

I think the term "Jefferies tube" dates to TOS.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Bad Horse  
2/21/10 9:48pm

It does, as did the GNDN seen stenciled on many a pipe and conduit. The letters stand for "Goes Nowhere, Does Nothing."

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Bad Horse  
2/22/10 2:13am

They've had them since the beginning, alurin - but they weren't called "Jefferies Tubes" on the show until TNG.

Didn't know about the provenance of "GNDN", Lord Running Clam - thanks for that!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 11:52am

Living forever

I'm torn on the "do you want to live forever?" question you pose, Zack. On one hand I feel some serious existential anxiety thinking about my own non-existence and how I can't imagine not existing (and, of course, thoughts of death are made worse by the uncertainty regarding how I might die - will it be peaceful? or painful?). At the same time, the idea of living forever also, upon thought, doesn't have appeal. It's the same problem whenever I ponder the idea of life after death (not in the Christian sense, of course; more in the sense

or perhaps a soul or whatever living on in some form). I don't like the idea of being nothing when I die. And then again, I don't know that I like the idea of eternity, good or bad, either.

Good thing it isn't up to me to decide this.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:02pm

I like the compromise of having a Vulcan's lifespan of 200 years. Plenty of time to get stuff done, but just enough to where you start getting sick of the repetitiveness of life.

[Reply](#)

- [Trurl](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:21pm

Forever? I don't want to live for another 10 years!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:23pm

On the other hand, Roger Zelazny populated his books with a lot of immortals, and they all seemed to enjoy themselves fine.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:32pm

I kind of like the Highlander idea - where you're immortal, but it's not a sure thing. You need to fight to keep what you have. There's still something to strive for, to be on the lookout for.

Otherwise, all that's left is self-imposed quixotic quests like Wowbagger, the Infinitely Prolonged.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:32pm

@JimZipCode As did Lazarus Long in the Heinlein books.

I would love to have a longer lifespan if I was able to retain physical and mental health.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:54pm

I'd choose immortality. Like Zach says, it probably wouldn't be wrought with pain and suffering from living a long life, but just have the same issues we have now. Honestly, an eternity of that doesn't sound as boring and dull as sitting around and worshipping the creator or whatever.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)St. God  
2/19/10 1:01pm

Live forever? Hell yes. I am totally banking on the imminent development of Brain-Transplant -Into-Robot Body technology.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)St. God  
2/19/10 2:06pm

JimZipCode: They enjoy themselves fine, at the cost of being a bunch of insufferable bastards. Those books intrigue me enough that I've read them multiple times, but I hate just about all those guys.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God  
2/19/10 2:23pm

I like "Conrad" from This Immortal (And Call Me Conrad). What's wrong with him?

I like Sam, from Lord Of Light. (What an awesome book.)

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)St. God  
2/19/10 2:28pm

Ah, you've caught me out as one of those only-read-Amber people. I should finally get around to LoL (lol!).

[Reply](#)

- [texasannie](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:14pm

I only would choose immortality if my husband could have it too, and only if we could stop aging right about now. We're in our early 30s, and we both have creaky joints already. Plus, I have MS. It's not bad right now, but that's not something you want to let progress forever. And how would we afford immortality? I don't like my job now — I definitely want to be able to retire at some point. Unless you're a super-happy fun person with great health and no strong attachments to people, living more than 90 years or so would suuuuuuuuck.

[Reply](#)

- [hulk6785](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:30pm

I'd like to live forever, because I'm so afraid that death will just be a black nothingness. And, I quite like having consciousness.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God  
2/19/10 4:26pm

Lord of Light is one of my favorite novels. The ending sucks, but endings are hard.

Conrad and Sam and (to some extent) Corwin seem like more or less the same guy (and I think there are a couple of similar characters in RZ), not that there's anything wrong with that.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)St. God  
2/19/10 5:25pm

I love me some Zelazny, and LoL is just about my favorite book, but his protagonists tended to be cut from rather similar molds.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
2/19/10 9:06pm

@alurin, comme sayeth the sage: 'If you don't have a good ending, you don't have a good beginning.'

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God



2/20/10 9:58am

Nice aphorism, Richelieu Jr., but it's not true. LoL has a great beginning, as do many other works with middling to lousy endings. Sad fact of life.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God

2/20/10 6:25pm

Will then maybe it's a great beginning, but simply in the wrong place. If you have a good beginning and nowhere to go with it, you don't have a story. You have an idea.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)St. God

2/21/10 1:58am

How about Heinlein's Lazarus Long, who has lived for thousands of years - and only once seriously attempted suicide (at the start of TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE), which he's talked out of by his countless descendants sitting around listening to him spin tall tales about his life...and getting pregnant by him, so he'll have to live long enough to watch MORE of his kids grow up? There's no moral reason for him to think immortality is wrong - he just originally decides he's lived long enough.

Regarding this discussion about immortality, I also thought about an X-FILES episode involving an immortal photographer - named, interestingly enough, "Tithonus". The photographer, Fellig, says that he's looking for somebody dying to take his life force so he can die - and Scully, surprisingly for a Catholic(!), argues she can't understand his desire to die at all as she can think of a LOT of things she could do if she knew she was living forever! In the end, Fellig finds the dying person who will take his life force - Scully herself - and dies as he desires. I always wondered if they weren't going to follow that up w/an episode set fifty or seventy-five years later, where Mulder is very VERY old - but Scully looks the same as she always has (kind of like how she did in the X-FILES: I WANT TO BELIEVE movie).

[Reply](#)

- [vandermonde](#)St. God

2/22/10 3:48am

Immortality and extreme longevity seem fine if your fantasy also happens to be post-scarcity. Otherwise, randomly being immortal is probably fine, but everyone being immortal would suck for everyone.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

2/25/10 3:51pm

I'm gonna disagree that the ending to LoL sucks. It's not a surprise twist ending, it's a "ride off into the sunset" ending, with a touch of "he's out there and will come back when needed", King Arthur-esque maybe. The actual prose of the ending is very pretty, with the child Kali giving Yama "the only offering he receives, of flowers."

LoL contains this memorable line:

"The day of the battle dawned pink as the fresh-bitten thigh of a maiden."

Amber has some good stuff, but it kind of sucks compared to some of his other work. I guess I was lucky that I didn't encounter Amber first. A non-Amber Zelazny list:

This Immortal (aka And Call Me Conrad)

novella A Rose for Ecclesiastes

novella The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth

Lord of Light

Doorways in the Sand (probably my favorite)

My Name is Legion (3 connected novellas, includes Home Is the Hangman)

His first few story collections, which included the novellas above, were awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God

2/26/10 10:14am

I'm quite fond of Amber, actually, at least the original series. I'm a sucker for the "I'm going to write a series of stories in different genres" device (also what I loved about Simmons' Hyperion). The "let's write some sequels to put my kids through college" books sucked, though.

The prose is fine, but the ending to the major conflict of the story is so anti-climactic it felt like Zelazny got that far and said "eh, I'm tired of this. let's wrap it up"

Don't forget Creatures of Light and Darkness...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

2/26/10 1:26pm

Didn't love Creatures, found it dry or something.

My take on the resolution to LoL is that Sam had finally worn them down over the years. That last fight is so much, uh, smaller than the first really big fight, because the gods are weaker. There's also an element of the background civilization growing up. The gods are a phase they grow out of. That's a naturally "anticlimactic" process: there's no slam-bang moment in growing up, the gods sort of fade away. And of course, post-resurrection Sam is much more reflective than young violent Sam.

I dunno, all these things feel like a natural and organic change in tone, to me. Your mileage may vary.

I feel Amber needs to be slammed, a bit. Not because it actually sucks — the first book had some awesome sequences, esp the fight on the stairs — but because:

(a) It's not as perfect as its fanboys proclaim. When I re-read it some years ago, I was really struck by how Zelazny was kind of working it out as he went along. They almost read like first drafts: if Z had had a chance to go back and reshape the early books in light of decisions he made for the later books, the series would have been tighter.

(b) Amber shouldn't overshadow Zelazny's other, awesome work. No one should like Amber and then fail to check out LoL, or This Immortal, or Doors/Lamps, etc.

Amber's good, sure. But it needs to be slammed a bit.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God

2/26/10 2:35pm

I haven't revisited Amber in many years. LoL I've read more recently, and I recall thinking that the ending definitely did not feel organic. But we can agree to disagree.

You may be right about Amber, particularly point (b), though I'm not sure it NEEDS to be slammed. Then again, I've never met any Amber fanboys, so I don't have strong feelings about its perfection or lack thereof.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

2/19/10 11:45am

Checkov

isn't really all that rapey in this one. Strange that in the end he basically rebuffs his old girlfriend. I guess there's no point in being rapey if she's interested.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God  
2/19/10 11:49am

I wonder who will be carrying the rapey ball in TNG. Probably Riker.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:50pm

The episode where the crew reverts back into primitive creatures features Worf biting Troi's cheek to mark her, so that's sort of rapey.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:50pm

Geordi is a ticking time bomb of sexual repression.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)St. God  
2/19/10 1:20pm

Ugh, speaking of groan moments: in that same 'Worf bites Troi' episode, Data's cat becomes an iguana. They actually took an iguana, slapped a collar on it & called it a devolved cat.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)St. God  
2/19/10 1:33pm

Whatever. According to Voyager, we're all under-evolved space salamanders, anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)St. God  
2/19/10 1:33pm

That's at least marginally more reasonable than the same episode's implication that humans evolved from spiders.

[Reply](#)

- [90.1](#)St. God  
2/19/10 1:59pm

Picard is a lemur, whereas Riker is a neanderthal.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)St. God  
2/19/10 2:42pm

I love Picard's face when Data tells him he will devolve into a "lemur or pygmy marmoset."

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:49pm

TNG...I think Riker makes a pretty good rapey look at the chicks from time to time, though often they return his affection. But man, there are times Riker looks completely creepy.

Worf will take the rapey torch from time to time, and as basically pointed out, that's probably normal for Klingons, whose entire mating ritual seems to basically be a rape fantasy.

Doesn't Wesley have a few rapey moments?

Also, Geordi. He was definitely rapey with that holodeck chick. Man alive. Also, that one woman who he was going out on dates with but never got it going with her.

TNG looks promising for the rapey.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:50pm

I would say young Wesley Crusher would have the most sexual tension. At least from the slash fiction I have read.

[Reply](#)

- [spicoli323](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:59pm

The worst thing about that space salamander episode—or one of over a dozen worst things, really—is Janeway's suggestion that she initiated the salamander mating. So a century after Chekov and Kirk, we have a female captain getting rapey with an underling. Progress!

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)St. God  
2/19/10 4:16pm

"Also, Geordi. He was definitely rapey with that holodeck chick. "

Man, you know that holodeck is just drenched in spoooge.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God  
2/19/10 4:36pm

I wonder what they do for jizzmoppers in the holodeck. I mean, the hologirl disappears but the people inside it do not, so there must be some distinction between the fake girl and the real DNA evidence inside.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)St. God  
2/19/10 5:01pm

i liked how, after Geordi met the real version holodeck chick and she got pissed off about it, the last episode suggested that they eventually got married.

women, amirite?

[Reply](#)

- [21st Century Peon](#)St. God  
2/19/10 5:20pm

Sheldon's Libido - By "read", do you in fact mean "written"?

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God

2/19/10 6:48pm

By "Read" I mean "Stumbled upon on the wife's laptop"

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)St. God

2/19/10 6:51pm

I've always assumed that the Holodeck vacuumed up any stray particles. Such as blood, sweat or "jizz"

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)St. God

2/19/10 7:19pm

so, your wife has TNG slash fiction bookmarked on her laptop? that's pretty hot. does she have a sister?

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)St. God

2/19/10 9:07pm

I always thought the transporter locked on to the holodeck jizz and beamed it out into space as energy. Of course, if some starship lightyears away were to intercept and decode the beam, their transporter chief would be thoroughly disgusted.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [pico79](#)Zack Handlen

2/19/10 11:48am

The reason there's so much art about

why immortality is bad is that it runs contrary to our most primal instinct to survive at any cost. That, or sci-fi writers get picked on a lot and just want it all to end.

One of the earliest surviving pieces of writing, the Epic of Gilgamesh, is already mocking the dream of immortality. In modern lit it goes back to Jonathan Swift, and the horrific struldbrugs. We have a long and distinguished cultural history of rejecting everlasting life.

[Reply](#)

- [ThunderLizard](#)pico79

2/19/10 12:20pm

There's also a "long and distinguished cultural history" of declaring the unobtainable as sour grapes. There's just as many stories that glorify immortality (vampires, anyone?) as those that dismiss it.

Also, the primal instinct of all organisms is to produce the next generation of that organism. People don't live forever because the goal of life, from a biological perspective, is to reproduce, not to survive indefinitely. From a Darwinian standpoint, the success of a species depends on how often it can crank out new generations, with each subsequent generation better adapting to its given environment. Adaptability kicks longevity's ass.

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)pico79

2/19/10 12:36pm

Eh, it just struck me as the usual conservative streak in sci-fi where any fundamental change to how humans interact or fundamentally \*are\* is bad. Since sci-fi is about \*us\*, if the story openly defines that as inferior it not only destroys the wish-fulfillment aspect but can be kind of a turnoff. If all the

super-smart-powerful-immortal aliens spent all their time living it up and happy and fulfilled and it's just too damn bad you pathetic loser humans will never experience the awesomeness - who wants to hear that? Vampires can at least recruit (and are usually mentally no different from humans anyway, even those hundreds of years old). So instead those people are always depressed, bored, deranged or otherwise damaged to ensure our wanking fantasies remain intact.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [jeffstaggpico79](#)  
2/19/10 1:09pm

Well, you're ignoring another long and distinguished cultural history of literature embracing eternal life. The Bible (parts of which are arguably as old as the Epic of Gilgamesh) is essentially a handbook of how to live forever, as is the Koran and most other religious texts (whether or not these are true is outside the point of the discussion)

[Reply](#)

- [alurinpico79](#)  
2/19/10 1:35pm

Stories about the dangers of immortality might be less about some philosophical objection to immortality per se, and more about the fact that the Law of Unintended Consequences makes for interesting storytelling. I'm thinking of the bit in The Lathe of Heaven, for example, where Orr tries to dream away racism, and ends up with a society where everyone is gray. This is a very fertile trope in science fiction, and the immortality aspect is just one flavor.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymouspico79](#)  
2/19/10 2:15pm

Immortality would cause some very obvious logistical problems, but if aging could be slowed down I think it could be pretty cool.

[Reply](#)

- [pico79pico79](#)  
2/19/10 3:25pm

jeffstagg: the Old Testament is not a handbook of how to live forever: that's a Christian thing, and dates from much, much, much later. The Jewish scripture has very little to say about any kind of afterlife, and it usually involves laying down in the earth and then, darkness.

Porkchop: first, I'm not sure vampires glorify eternal life, except in very recent pop culture. Their immortality is another thing to fear, because it's unnatural. Most immortal beings (discounting gods) in folk culture are evil. That's not to say that we don't have a cultural heritage of glorifying immortality - and not just cultural: hello, Ponce de Leon - but I was addressing one specific line of anti-immortality, which goes back further than any other theme of death in our (surviving) cultural history.

[Reply](#)

- [jeffstaggpico79](#)  
2/19/10 3:34pm

well yes, the only way immortality would work on any sort of large scale is if it were coupled with infertility. Even slowing the aging process or simply delaying death would have logistical problems.

[Reply](#)

- [jeffstaggpico79](#)  
2/19/10 4:19pm

Pico,

After some fact checking, I admit I was incorrect on the age of the various texts, however, the old testament does promise the dead rising again after the coming of the Messiah

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)pico79  
2/19/10 7:36pm

I just wish that the Law of Unintended Consequences could show that sometimes, the unintended results are actually \*good\*, and the subtle "tamper not in god's domain" message wouldn't be so smug and consistent. I mean, when has an engineering project or technological advance in Star trek (DS9 not included) ever actually worked? It's always arrogant meddlers opening Pandora's boxes - where's the cat discovering Lexan or old sandwich leading to penicillin? That could lead to some great stories too, without the conservative "obey the plan and mind your place" crap.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)pico79  
2/19/10 8:58pm

Living forever or breaking natural law is an archetype that probably dates from the dawn of man. that said, much of what you have all said is true...

That said, the old testament doesn't speak of an afterlife, and no respectable scholar would say that parts of the Torah were as old as the Epic of Gilgamesh.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)pico79  
2/20/10 10:02am

@Dired: Star Trek is usually pretty high on the consequences of technological development. The premise, after all, is that humans have overcome the challenges of the 20th century to forge a shiny interstellar empire without poverty. TNG in particular proposes that the consequences of technology are unlimited prosperity and an end to drugery, war, et al.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)pico79  
2/21/10 1:40am

Though in later seasons of TNG and DS9, as well as most of the TNG movies, there were rumblings that the Federation was dying - slowly, but dying nonetheless.

And didn't ANDROMEDA, that series Major Barrett produced based on Roddenberry's notes after he died, deal with a starship Captain trying to revive The Federation - sorry, the "Systems Commonwealth" 300 years after it fell?

DS9 also often dealt with inequities in Federation "perfection", like that two-parter where Starfleet Command declared martial law on Earth thanks to a Founder threat that Sisko had to tear apart to save everybody - and there was a great scene where Quark cuts Sisko off in mid-rant about "greedy Ferengis" to sharply remind him that at least Ferengis never engaged in genocide or slavery!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)pico79  
2/22/10 10:00am

That would be an interesting setting for a space opera show, an empire that was on its last legs. Hold on a sec while I pitch this to SyFy....

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)pico79

I beg you.

Reply

Hide replies

- [barefoot\\_jim](#) Zack Handlen

2/19/10 12:23pm

## SPACE HIPPIES?? SPACE PUNKS!!

Luckily, "The Way to Eden" became such a punchline that TNG never did a follow-up SPACE PUNKS!!! episode.

That said, the thought of Wil Wheaton playing Wesley Crusher as a SPACE PUNK (before he learns his lesson, of course) is pretty hilarious.

I guess the closest that Trek ever got to SPACE PUNKS!! was the casting of Johnny Slash to play Kirk's son. But even that was new wave, which is a totally different head.

Totally.

Reply

- magnusbarefoot jim  
2/19/10 1:05pm

At least recent re-broadcasts have cut out the scenes with Rosie O'Donnell in S/M gear.

Oh, never mind.

Reply

- [Bob K](#)barefoot jim  
2/19/10 2:23pm

That probably saved us from Jake Sisko going through a hip-hop phase too. Though towards the end it would have been nice if they'd found anything for him to do.

Reply

- [barefoot jim](#) barefoot jim  
2/19/10 4:27pm

Or even in the beginning. I always feel like the Jake character existed because somebody thought that it would interesting to have a widower Trek Captain raising an adolescent.

On paper, maybe. But then they made him a low-key, well-behaved aspiring writer, and  
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.

Reply

- [JammerJim](#) barefoot jim  
2/19/10 5:32pm

Jake was probably the best-written kid we ever saw in any incarnation of ST. Low bar, I know, but still.

## Reply

- Bob K barefoot jim  
2/19/10 6:25pm

I kind of liked the very beginning of the writer / doesn't-want-to-go-to-Starfleet subplot (and Sisko having to deal with him dating the Dabbo Girl), but yeah they ran out of gas on that pretty fast.



If I could change just one thing in season 7, I'd have Ezri fall for Jake instead of Bashir. That pairing was super-lame, and seeing Sisko try to get his head around that one would have been amazing.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim  
2/19/10 9:24pm

.. and here i thought i'd come up with the 'space punks' gag...

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)barefoot jim  
2/20/10 4:59pm

My guess about why the Dominion pulled out is that Odo told the Female Changeling during their weird mind meld thing that if she surrendered he would rejoin them and give them the cure. Given that the war wasn't going superwell for them anyway she agreed. They never spell this out at all, though.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)barefoot jim  
2/21/10 2:27am

You're right, Shaun - the Dominion War ended with the dramatic equivalent of "Oh! We made a terrible mistake trying to conquer you. Our bad - we'll surrender now." As good as the show had been up to that point, that ending was really lame - and WTF did they retcon Sisko into some Chosen One, anyway? It was actually very clever to see him as the most reluctant of reluctant holy figures since Brian of Nazareth, while slowly growing into his Emissary role because The Prophets saw something in him he didn't know he had in himself....

Ezri Dax? Ehrrrrrr - not great, not bad, but yeah it sure would have been better if she and Jake had hooked up, rather than Julian finally getting Dax, sort of. Forget Sisko - imagine \*Worf\* trying to be understanding of his late wife in another body, making it with a teenage boy! :D

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)barefoot jim  
2/22/10 8:03am

You know, if you really want to see Space Punks!!!! there's an episode of Blakes 7 called Stardrive just begging for your attention...

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)barefoot jim  
2/23/10 11:03am

The Space Punks follow-up show was called Red Dwarf.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 2:08pm

I'll renew my objection  
to Eden from last week:

Its not just that they're Space Hippies, but the Jack Webb version of Space Hippies.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 2:42pm

A middle-aged TV exec's version of Space Hippies. Though the story was originally developed by DC Fontana, who was just reaching her sexual peak at the time.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 6:39pm

www.fastcopyinc.com/orionpr... The original story by Fontana was about McCoy's daughter Joanna visiting the ship with a group (led by Sevrin) called "the Artists," who aren't space hippies; the planet Eden turns out to be dead (not poisonous) and revivable. See an interesting synopsis of the original story treatment at .

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 9:26pm

JB's got it just right... And what's more, Roddenberry and Webb were pretty tight.. (Roddenberry was the LAPD liaison for Dragnet, Kevin Spacey's character was based on him for LA Confidential)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 9:27pm

in.re the 'joanna' episode: The link doesn't work for me...

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 10:09pm

Just tried it again and it works for me (current version of Safari for Mac). Or try googling "Joanna — precursor of The Way to Eden".

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/19/10 10:32pm

I'm on a Mac too... Perhaps it's because I'm coming from France?  
Anyways, I'll give your second method a try... Thanks!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/21/10 1:02am

Finally got to the 4joanna' ting which is as interesting as advertised- I highlyu recommend it.  
The rest of the site is packed with interesting info, too.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/21/10 10:34am

Looks like a really fun website, thanks gottacook2!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 11:44am

Hey, man, why do you wear all those clothes? How do you breathe?

I actually enjoyed Eden better than Requiem. I actually strongly dislike Requiem. It pissed me off as a kid and rewatching it earlier in the week, it still pisses me off for some reason. But Eden is a hell of a lot of fun. And I

must admit the ending actually got me as a kid and still isn't bad. Eden is, as you say, a punchline among Trek fans, but on rewatching (and besides the fucking ridiculous songs which I fastforwarded through) it is actually not completely horrible. I'd say it's even better than Spock's Brain.

Next week - Space Lincoln! Saw that one a few weeks ago, can't wait to see it covered here.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)St. God  
2/19/10 12:56pm

I honestly like Spock's Brain, as I'm pretty sure it was written with tongue planted firmly in cheek. It introduces us to the idea that Starfleet has the technology to remote control Vulcans, and that you can gain vast knowledge by wearing a salad bowl on your head.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)St. God  
2/19/10 3:54pm

I agree, TNG did episodes maybe similar in premise, but they probably did it a bit better.

I caught most of one recently that I don't remember seeing when I was a kid that was somewhat similar, with some immortal dude living on a planet that was attacked but his house remained. And Troi went nuts because he tried to hide it from her so put some music box music in her head (this seriously creeped me the fuck out). Come to find out the dude was pretending to be human and just wanted to live with his wife, but aliens had attacked the world and killed everyone. He refused to fight but when they killed his wife, he wiped them out of fucking history. I thought it was decently done.

But yeah, TNG did some of this stuff. The problem with immortal characters, particularly in Star Trek, is they are basically mortals. I mean, they act like humans (but most aliens act human in Star Trek, I guess). Wouldn't a truly immortal person probably act completely different? Also, what about aging? If someone had been alive in the same corporeal existence for hundreds of years, would they stop aging at some point? Or would they be like whatever mythological character I can't think of who was immortal but still aged so he turned into a grasshopper or a fig newton or something.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
2/19/10 8:50pm

Ah yes, Biggus Figgus Newtonus!

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)St. God  
2/20/10 8:34pm

yes, you've got it right re the paul winfield episode, "Darmok". Winfield played the captain from a species who communicated exclusively via metaphor. A pretty good one, IMO

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)St. God  
2/21/10 1:16am

"Biggus Figgus Newtonus!" Props for that, Richelieu Jr.!

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>I'm surprised Sugartits didn't show up to inform you the Greek mythological character you refer to was Tithonus ( ), St.G.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God  
2/21/10 10:20am

"Darmok" is one of the best Star Trek episodes ever, in any incarnation. But i don't see the similarity to Requiem.

[Reply](#)

- [ChicJanowicz](#)St. God  
2/21/10 7:03pm

"I'd say it's even better than Spock's Brain."

So are hemorrhoids, but that's not saying a lot.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [EdKed](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 3:53pm

Dr. Sevrin

After years of growing up seeing this episode since I was a kid, I went to see Shriekback on their "Oil and Gold" tour. When their lead singer (former XTC member Barry Andrews) burst onto the stage, he was wearing this freaky floral robe thing, as well has having a shaved head, and looked almost exactly like Dr. Sevrin from this episode (minus the weird lumpy ears).

I mentioned it to my friend, but he didn't know what I was talking about ("Come on! The Space Hippies episode! How can you not remember?!")

It was a really fun concert, in any case. Does anyone remember them at all these days?

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)EdKed  
2/19/10 7:28pm

"Call in an air strike  
with a poison kiss."

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)EdKed  
2/19/10 9:37pm

iIsaw Shriekback on that tour, but the Dr Sevrin resemblance was lost onme (though i remember that robe to this day...)

Have you heard Andrew's new project with Andy Partridge? I like it, though my opinion may be in the minority...

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)EdKed  
2/19/10 9:42pm

I know what you're referring to (Monstrance? I think?) but I haven't heard it yet. I'd like to, though.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)EdKed  
2/19/10 9:49pm

Also, this episode permanently distorted the mental images in my head whenever I hear the Velvet Underground's "Venus in Furs" to this day, as I just imagine Lou Reed ordering the leader of the Space Hippies around...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)EdKed  
2/19/10 10:35pm

'Sevrin, Sevrin...Taste the boots of shiny, shiny leather...'  
ah yes, Lou Reed at his best..

APE.comAnd yes, i was talking about Monstrance, although the new project is really great, jumping from XTC-ish pop to more jagged, modern stuff;. Check it out on the site!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 12:11pm

Young Napier looks like a completely different person than the Napier I'm familiar with  
Also, he played the general in the great DS9 episode "Little Green Men."

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 12:22pm

General Denning.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 12:53pm

Tucker McElroy, lead singer and driver of the Winnebago.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 2:03pm

Just try singing with a mouthful of broken teeth.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 4:21pm

We'll tahk ta Bahb.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 7:13pm

Don't you say a fucking WORD!

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 7:26pm

Who are you?

We're the Good Ol' Boys!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous  
2/19/10 9:12pm

Good interview with him here at AVCLUB about 10 months ago...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen

2/19/10 4:03pm

Hippie-rific Triple Feature

"Eden" and 2 Lost In Space eps -

"The Promised Planet" with space hippies.

"Collision of Planets" with space bikers atop their space hogs.

The latter features a young Daniel Travanti.

[Reply](#)

- [Bart Fargo](#)magnus

2/19/10 4:50pm

I reach you magnus!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)magnus

2/19/10 9:38pm

Daniel Travanti was never young...

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)magnus

2/19/10 10:12pm

Well, no one calling himself "Daniel J. Travanti" wants to be thought of as young, certainly not by casting agents, but on Lost in Space he was billed as "Dan Travanty".

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)magnus

2/19/10 10:36pm

Really, i always though of him popping out of the womb with the 'J.' in his hand...

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)magnus

2/23/10 11:07am

Add "Demons and Angels" from Red Dwarf season 5 and make it a tetralogy.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen

2/19/10 2:55pm

poul anderson

"Requiem for Methuselah" kind of reminds me of Poul Anderson's The Boat of a Million Years—a few random people born into immortality and living through human history, with all the attendant pressure of being so different. Obviously that novel came out decades later and goes in some very different directions, but I don't recall Anderson caring very much to explain why there are immortals.

Or maybe Flint was exiled to Earth from the planet Zeist and no one ever informed him that there can be only one.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)i hate to be that guy

2/19/10 3:02pm

I'm not troubled by the lack of explanation. It seems to me that if the immortal knew why he was immortal, then maybe he could make others immortal and then we'd all be immortal. I think if you want to explore the loneliness angle, you have to start from a sense of ignorance about WHY they are different.

[Reply](#)

- [alurini](#) hate to be that guy  
2/19/10 3:40pm

Somebody above mentioned Zelazny's various immortals, who are similarly unexplained. In those stories, typically their immortality isn't the central point of the novel (even "This Immortal"), but something more like an ethnic background. That makes it much easier to ignore the why and wherefore of it all. When the immortality is central to the plot, it becomes a little more important to know why they're immortal.

[Reply](#)

- [vandermondei](#) hate to be that guy  
2/22/10 4:30am

Yeah, it seems perfectly reasonable that whatever the explanation is, he doesn't know it. My body is constantly doing some things I don't understand and certainly couldn't explain to other people.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 12:26pm

When we rate it, what are we rating?  
The underlying episode(s), or Zack's review?

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 12:54pm

The episodes. Normally that window would also have the reviewer's (ie, me) grade for the ep, but since I cover two a week, and don't go in for filthy averages, it's left blank. Feel free to grade however you like, though.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 2:08pm

What an interesting meta idea. Zack grades the episode and we grade Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 5:36pm

I give you an F, AV Club!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
2/19/10 9:24pm

Z for Zach!

[Reply](#)

- [vandermonde](#)JimZipCode  
2/22/10 4:01am

I give this thread a C-

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [udjibbom](#)Zack Handlen

2/20/10 1:12pm

robots

maybe this has been discussed before and i missed it, but has there ever been ANY sort of in-show examination of the fact androids and robots that look exactly like humans are running rampant in TOS era but, about 80 years later are so rare that starfleet actually tries to dissect data, the one and only android they've admitted into their ranks?

i know, i know: this is kind of a fanwank on the order of why klingons were just swarthy dudes in TOS and had ridges and shit by the time the movies came along... but didn't Enterprise at least try to address that issue? i haven't seen more than a handful of eps from that series but i follow nerd-discussions on the internet and that was the impression i'd gotten: something about the klingons trying to create a super-soldier or turn elves into orcs or some shit like that?

to say nothing of the question of why the fuck those klingons didn't just use the guardian of forever [or fly really fast around a convient sun] to go back in time and steal the apparently abundant TOS-era tech that would allow them to build a bunch of robots that look just like human beings?!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)udjibbom  
2/20/10 2:32pm

Why bother to build robots? In TOS, Klingons could pass as human (see The Trouble with Tribbles)!

I think this issue will have to remain in the domain of fanwank.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)udjibbom  
2/20/10 6:36pm

It's a good question though, juse one I don't think has any good answer except the obvious one: They hadn't thought Data out to that point....

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)udjibbom  
2/22/10 4:06am

Excellent point, udjibbom!

Sadly, the answer is very simple - the writing on TNG blew. Harder than Captain Morgan....

[Reply](#)

- [Bart Fargo](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 2:44pm

Why was the hippie music audible throughout the Enterprise?

Scott's side-kick is grooving to it, Dr. Servin's guard is swaying to it, it's echoing down the hallways but why? Normally the ambient sounds of the rec room aren't piped throughout the ship.

And gee whiz, from the way the crew is instantly transfixed, you get the impression that they hadn't heard music of any sorts in years. There should have been an episode where they just sped across the galaxy blasting "Fear of a Black Planet" on all decks.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Bart Fargo  
2/19/10 2:49pm



Same reaction in Charlie X, when Spock & Uhura make music.

It makes sense. They only get canned entertainment: when someone plays something live for them, they enjoy it. I bet next time you're on a 5 year mission, you'll enjoy live entertainment, even if it is lame.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Bart Fargo  
2/19/10 3:46pm

You gotta listen to something when you're eating colored squares.

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Bart Fargo  
2/20/10 12:49am

"Same reaction in Charlie X, when Spock & Uhura make music."

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...>

That was awesome!

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 4:51pm

"Adam, you know I reach you."

I guess I'll reprise my role as '60s Cultural Context Guy again, and point out that the reason Spock is the guy who gets the space hippies is not so much that he's a generic outsider, but that the Vulcans are sometimes used as ersatz Japanese in Trek. The writers are tying the Space Hippies' anti-materialism kick to the largely vapid faux-Asian philosophy some of their real-life counterparts claimed to practice; Spock "gets it" because he grew up in a culture that practices the real thing.

The episode thus functions as a double criticism of those wacked out counter-culture kids of "today". Not only do they have long hair and crazy ideas, but their claims to greater spiritual enlightenment through rejection of Good and Decent Federation Values are exposed as hokum perpetrated by a manipulative cult leader, and eventually prove totally self-destructive.

(For no good reason, I will also point out that snippets of dialogue from "The Way to Eden" are used at the beginning and end of the White Zombie song "Starface" from La Sexorcisto.)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Ajax  
2/20/10 12:09am

There's a nice note of tragedy when Spock speaks that line. He's trying to get thru to Adam, and runs flat up against Adam's misplaced cynicism. Spock is always the most honest guy in the room (except on board a Romulan ship): Adam stands next to Sevrin and laughs cynically at Spock.

Spock never speaks with Adam again. Next time Spock sees him, Adam is dead.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
2/19/10 8:15pm

ryetalyn

I think my parents used to give me this drug to get me to calm down...

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)Richelieu Jr

2/22/10 4:04am

I filched mine from my kid brother, and used to stay up ALL Weekend Long!

He hated what it did to him, so he never said anything....

[Reply](#)

- [Jay Mucci](#)Zack Handlen  
3/28/14 2:47pm

It seems like there are so many episodes in Season 3 that have interesting premises but are just simply not executed as well as they could have been. It's like they take a half way decent idea and don't spend enough time working it all out so that it's believable. Or they take the idea in a direction that does it no favors. I kinda liked the Requiem episode except for the fact that Kirk does seem to become so smitten over Rayna that he spends more time acting like a lovesick schoolboy than like a starship captain who is responsible for most of his crew being sick. It might have made more sense if Chekov had beamed down with them and he had been the one to fall in love. It just seems unbelievable that Kirk would fall in love so instantly and to such a degree that he lost track of why they were there in the first place. And then be so distraught over her dying... esp. when she wasn't even technically human. It wasn't a bad episode, but it could have been written a bit more believably.

[Reply](#)

- [Adalena Berg](#)Zack Handlen  
1/21/14 9:27pm

I agree that 'Eden' was a little... misguided, but there were some good points, like, um... No, seriously, though, there were good moments, like the melancholy reprise of "Going into Eden" over Adam's body, and characterization of Spock's loneliness.

[Reply](#)

- [Towelie McTowelson](#)Zack Handlen  
2/22/10 11:36am

That picture is hilarious  
Is that Will fucking Forte?

[Reply](#)

- [Mike Greggs](#)Zack Handlen  
4/12/11 4:58pm

Dr. Severin  
And what of his Brass Knuckle shaped ears?

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek*: "The Cloud Minders"/"The Savage Curtain"**

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published February 26, 2010

[Comments \(137\)](#)



We're getting close to the end, folks. I've given up hope at this point of finding some lost classic, which is for the best. *Star Trek* has been pored over by fans for decades, and the idea that I'd stumble across an episode that had gotten lost in the shuffle is a tad deluded, to put it kindly. This season wasn't as bad as I was expecting, but it wasn't what I'd call good, either, with underdeveloped writing, uneven performances, and stories that unabashedly recycled the same bare handful of ideas while often failing to meet even the minimum demands of such theft. So you start hunting for interesting moments, even while you accept that those moments aren't ever going to combine into a satisfying whole. You savor character interactions, good pieces of dialog, striking design elements. You realize what interested you in the series to begin with, even if all that's left are echoes.

"The Cloud Minders" isn't a complete loss, although much of what's good about it has been done better elsewhere. (This is also true of "The Savage Curtain." In fact, it could be considered an epitaph for the whole season.) The central conflict should be familiar to anyone with a basic knowledge of labor struggles, or if you maybe read *The Time Machine*, by H.G. Wells; it's the people of Stratos versus the Troglytes instead of the Eloi and the Morlocks, but the principle remains. The privileged elite have become dangerously disconnected from the sweat and toil that keeps their civilization running, and while the workers haven't quite got to the flesh-eating phase in their struggles for the proletariat, they're definitely beyond writing firm letters to the newspaper.

This poses something of a problem for Kirk and company, because the Troglytes do the mining, and the *Enterprise* is visiting Stratos to pick up some much needed zenite, a mineral of crucial importance for stopping a botanical plague over on another planet. Again, this isn't the first time we've had this set-up; hell, we saw roughly the same thing happen last week. It's a little disappointing that we never get to address the plague directly—we're informed that if the zenite isn't delivered on time, all the plant life on the planet will die, and that could've served as a good focus. There's a curious conservatism in many third season storylines; not from a political standpoint, but in the way the writers keep retreading the same ground. Which is too bad, really. I'd be willing to endure a few more missteps like "The Empath" if it had led to more risk-taking in the scripts overall.

But we've got what we've got, so let's see how that plays out. After a brief struggle planet-side with some angry miners (later labeled "Disruptors," which sounds like the name of somebody's high school New Wave band), Kirk, Spock, and McCoy meet Plasus, high advisor of Stratos and essentially the only ruling figure from the city we ever deal with. He apologizes for the misadventure, and invites everybody back to the cloud city for some chill time while his people try and force the Troglytes to give up the necessary materials. (The cloud city effect is obviously done on the cheap, but it's effective nonetheless. There's something fairy tale-ish about such a perfect model castle floating overhead.) In Stratos, Spock makes an impression on this week's Wearing Next To Nothing Female, Droxine, who happens to be Plasus' daughter. She's smitten by Spock's background and intellect, so we get a few scenes distributed throughout the ep of Spock keeping his pimp hand strong. (So to speak.)

Kirk makes an impression of his own on Vanna, the leader of the Disruptors, when she breaks into his room and tries to take him hostage. They struggle on the bed for a while in a fight scene that can only be described as... unpleasant, until Kirk takes control and learns of her plans. Unsurprisingly, Kirk is sympathetic towards the rebelling workers, and it's hard not to be; they're stuck doing all the crap work, while the cloud city folks lark about and behave like grad students (ie, "the worst people.") (that was a *30 Rock* reference, by the way). Plus, while both sides are aggressive about standing up for themselves, Plasus breaks out the torture faster than you can shout "Where is Marwan?!?", and that's never really a good sign.

The most interesting angle that "Cloud" takes, story-wise, is that it actually bothers to find some justification for the Stratos bigotry against the Troglytes. McCoy discovers that the miners *are* mentally inferior to a normal person, because of a gas they inhale from mining zenite. Plasus is still a blind, infuriating ass, but his and his people's prejudice is grounded in some kind of fact, and it's hard to know how to take that. It ends up providing the episode with a third act, as Kirk decides to take matters into his own hands and force Plasus to directly experience the gas's effects. But given that the fight between the two groups is already pretty easy to understand without outside factors, why is it necessary to have the gas at all? The Troglytes aren't going to be as educated as the Stratosians, because their job requirements don't call for it (some of them work as servants on the cloud city, which is how Vanna ended up being away from the gas's effects long enough to get her brains back), and the conflict between the under-educated and the elite is such a familiar one that giving it a logical justification is redundant at best. It doesn't even serve to make Plasus more sympathetic, because he never stops being an angry, blinded creep.

But like I said, this does give us a third act, and it does give Kirk a chance to get kind of stupid, so that's all right. I'm not sure I completely buy that the gas wears off as quickly as it does, and that prolonged exposure has no cumulative ill effect. This seems like a narrative cop-out—just like the gas itself. Because what if the Troglytes really were somehow mentally inferior, and they still didn't want to spend their whole lives doing dangerous, demanding work? Does missing a few IQ points mean more intelligent people are fully justified in exploiting you? I'm grateful that "Cloud" had enough story that it didn't drag too terribly near the end, and Droxine and Spock's flirtation was entertaining, but philosophy-wise, it chickened out in a way that's highly unusual for the show. There's nothing wrong with a disenfranchised lower class trying to stand up for its rights, and pretending that the Troglytes could really be just like the Stratosians misses the point of such a struggle.

While "The Savage Curtain" is just as derivative as "Cloud," it's a lot more fun, and it's deeper than you'd expect from an episode that opens with Abraham Lincoln in space. Hey, you know how everybody complains about TV, how it's destroyed our culture and turned millions into attention-span-deficit morons? Well, everybody is wrong, and *Star Trek* gives us proof. Without daily programming, our race would've quickly turned to games of death and chance for our amusement, kidnapping strangers from other worlds to compete against one another simply because we couldn't think of anything better to do with our time. TV saves *lives*, my friends. Without it, we'd all just be another group of hideous rock monsters living on the lava planet. (Don't question me! This is *science*.)

The *Enterprise* is orbiting a red planet, and for once, Spock's computer equipment has found actual signs of life—the problem is, it's carbon-based life, and given the planet's unstable, really, really, really hot environment, that's just flat out impossible. Uhura isn't able to make contact with whatever life is down there, real or computer glitch, and because no one can actually beam in to check on the readings in person, for once Kirk decides to do the sensible thing and leave. (I know it wouldn't make for great drama, but I wish we could've seen a few instances where the *Enterprise* discovers a strange anomaly, but can't do a damn thing about it. Most everything our heroes encounter has been explicable, even if

the explanation often boils down to, "A wizard did it.") But it's too late! Before the ship can exit orbit, the form of Abraham Lincoln appears on the view screen, very chummy, very confident in his flat-out impossible existence.

Sadly, this also turns out to be explicable. And really, there's no "sadly" about it. Opening with a ridiculous plot reveal, something so incongruous that it couldn't possibly make sense, is basically making a promise to your audience: somehow, this *will* work out in the end. The writer has asked a question—in this case, "How in the holy hell is a president centuries dead able to project his image onto the *Enterprise* view-screen, as well as have extensive knowledge of Jim Kirk and his crew?"—and now we get to spend the next half hour or so really, really hoping the answer doesn't suck.

Of course, *Trek* has long ago perfected the Art of Improbable Resolutions, so nobody should be that surprised when the inevitable god-like being makes its appearance on-screen at the fifteen minute mark. (Roughly.) As god-like beings go, the race of Rock Lobsters we deal with in "Curtain" at least have the advantage of a distinctive appearance. I'm assuming it's a race, anyway. The one dude we see informs Kirk, Spock, Lincoln, and Surak, the Vulcan responsible for Spock and his people's way of life, that they are being watched by the planets inhabitants, that they're part of a study in the power of good and evil, and that if they ever want to get home again (a question that, conveniently, only seems relevant to Kirk and Spock), they'll need to defeat some of history's greatest monsters to prove their worth. Hey, remember "Arena"? It's a little like that, only no space lizard, and nobody does any lathing.

I was neutral on Lincoln's presence here. While it's never definitively stated (a point in this episode's favor is that very few things are), he appears to have been selected by the Rock Lobsters because Kirk has a natural affinity towards the dead president, much like Spock has a connection to Surak. That's reasonable, but, unsurprisingly, the Lincoln we see here is so thoroughly indebted to the popular view of the man, even down to the predictable, Halloween-costume style clothes, that it's hard to get overly attached. The actor who plays Lincoln, Lee Bergere, is as comfortably noble as one would expect, and the character is never an embarrassment. (He calls Uhura a "charming Negress," but I could've stood for more of this. He briefly looked like a person.) And really, since Lincoln and Surak are most likely creations of the Rock Lobsters taken directly from inspiration stored in the *Enterprise* memory banks, it's not that unusual that space Lincoln is more archetype than actual.

I was more interested in Surak, though, because I didn't have any real pre-conceptions as to the nature of a fictional character I'd never heard of before. Even better, Surak's personality comes across much clearer in this episode than Lincoln's, because he disagrees with Kirk's intention to fight back, and instead counsels peace, ultimately to the cost of his own life. In an ep so clearly designed for goofy thrills, it's worth noting how much time is spent discussing the consequences of those thrills, and the dangers of embracing force for force's sake. Surak attempts to negotiate with the monsters the Rock Lobster calls forth (Colonel Green, who did some genociding, Genghis Kahn, who people have heard of, a Klingon named Kahless the Unforgettable, and Zora, apparently loan from Hryule), and is murdered for his troubles, but whether or not his ideals held true, it's impressive that "Curtain" bothers to give those ideals a chance at all. This is slightly undercut but "Surak's" repetitive calls of "Help me, Spock" post-capture (the cries are being made by Kahless, apparently the Rich Little of the Klingon set); his voice is so flat and disconnected that it's laughable even if you hadn't, like me, grown up hearing the line used as a riff on *Mystery Science Theater 3000*. The third season of *Trek* really opened up a lot of doors for those guys.

It's entertaining watching Scotty and McCoy struggle with a powerless ship while Kirk and Spock fight on the planet, although we've seen this set-up so many times before it's hard to get too invested in anything either the engineer or our favorite doctor does. The crew ends up watching the battle on the view-screen, again calling to mind "Arena," and apart from Scott's colorful explanation for why he can't beam Kirk and Spock back to the ship ("We don't have the power. They'll come aboard a mass of dying flesh."), this is standard, fill-in-the-blank material. The actual fight between the Good Guys and the Baseball Furies has a high body count for the heroes (Lincoln gets a spear in the back!), but Kirk and Spock win, and Kirk gets to give an impassioned lecture about how the whole Rock Lobster plan was so totally, like, unfair and stupid and stuff. And of course he's right. The few moments of profundity to be had here come from characters who are almost certainly phantasms, and the set-up is a teleplay Mad Lib.

But for all that, I enjoyed it. There is an inarguable exhaustion at work here, as we enter into the final stages of the first phase of *Trek*-dom, a sense of material churned out not for passion's sake but to meet quotas and generate paychecks. And yet some of the passion remains. I'm not sure I'm going to have time to do any sort of comprehensive discussion of

the show as a whole, but I will say this much: by and large, *Trek* always took itself seriously, and that meant taking its audience seriously as well. It's disappointing that the final season became something so ordinary, but even with that, there's a lot of potential entertainment here. You just have to be willing to choke down a certain amount of dregs, bitter and otherwise.

#### Grades:

"The Cloud Minders": C+

"The Savage Curtain": B

#### Stray Observations:

- "I have never met a Vulcan, sir." "Nor I a work of art, madam." Smoooooth.
- Phrase I will endeavor to use out of context as often as I can till my friends threaten to hurt me: "Secure him to the rostrum!"
- Spock, to Droxine: "There is great beauty in the knowledge that lies below." Um. Does that mean what—no. No, probably not.
- "Help me, Spock! Spock, help me!"
- Next week, we finish up season three with "All Our Yesterdays" and "Turnabout Intruder."

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (136)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Erik E Erik](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:25am

I refuse to purchase Season 3 on Blu Ray

Seasons 1 and 2 were good enough, season 1 had an overdose of the god-man at times, but I won't be watching anything of less quality than those two seasons. Maybe I'll just stream it off CBS.

[Reply](#)

- [Erik E Erik](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 10:48am

Please note: not a firstie, secondie or thirdie. This is something I've really been considering for a while, I purchased the Blu Rays of the first two seasons having never seen them before, and have been moderately entertained but not head-explodingly mindblown (although Balance of Terror and Space Seed were \_awesome\_). I know that the third season has a reputation for being a real drop in quality and I've been watching these reviews to see if I should take the jump just to follow the series to its end. Zack's opening to this week is sort of the last nail in that possibility's coffin. No one really has anything positive to say about the third season without some sort of disclaimer.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 11:02am

But what if in the far future some grad student archielogist is digging up your place and comes to the conclusion that there were only 2 seasons of Star Trek? Dammit think of the future.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [PancakeLad](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 11:35am

I often wonder about that. What would an archeologist some 3000 years in the future think about us? Hell, what would they find, given that almost all of our art and education and entertainment is digital now?

or they'd just porn. lots and lots of porn.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 11:58am

NPR had an interesting little bit recently about how, with the imposition of digital tv and radio, Earth is no longer going to be sending out radio signals that could be picked up by alien civilizations.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 12:03pm

Not that aliens really give a crap about you until you invent warp drive.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 12:04pm

Most of the really good archaeological data comes from examining midden piles - essentially going through the dump and seeing what a culture threw away, which gives a pretty good record of what was important to that society, and how much of it they were using.

I have a feeling this age will become known as Diaper Age - with perplexing stratigraphic layer upon layer of compressed Huggies fully demonstrating our ecological insanity. An insectoid Dr. Jones will buzz to his class "They killed the planet because they didn't want to touch poo".

Other puzzles will include the huge deposits of chicken wing bones with no evidence of any of the rest of the chicken. Will they assume we had some kind of bizarre religious rite involving sacrifices of wings in spicy sauce?

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 2:19pm

Season 3 of Classic Trek - "Spock's Brain" > Every subsequent Trek spinoff put together

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 3:37pm

Does anyone remember the LoSG where Tenzil Kem (Matter Eater Lad) was hosting some hokey "In Search of" type show. They were digging up the ruins of a cave outside Gotham and found a giant playing card and giant penny. Tenzil claimed that it was proof that there was a race of giant presidents that roamed the stars.

[Reply](#)

- [AV Club Ist Krieg](#)Erik E Erik  
2/26/10 4:03pm

@haysoos

The book "Motel Of The Mysteries" takes a similar idea and runs with it in pretty amusing fashion.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)Erik E Erik  
2/27/10 11:39am

Haysoos, you make me laugh. We should write terrible, terrible, metaphor-free sci-fi together.

[Reply](#)

- [udjibbom](#)Erik E Erik  
2/27/10 1:45pm

just gotta chime in a third time in support of the bierbaum's Legion of Super-Heroes run - the entire body of work was wonderful but Tenzil Kem really stood out as a highlight.

i guess there's a band called Tenzil Kem and the Senators; i haven't heard their music yet but any group that can make a reference like that is all right with me.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Erik E Erik  
2/27/10 1:59pm

Can you imagine an alien race who came upon Earth and had notihhg b ut porn to know how we reproduced? 'Well, the male of the species ejaculates on the face of the submissive, flinching female...' Mating rituals involved Pizza deliveries, Maids cleaning houses, and help with homework...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cattivo](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 11:56am

Surak and Kahless

The Savage Curtain was the first mention of Surak and Kahless, two important, mythic figures in later Trek (Shame on you Zack for not knowing who Kahless was ;) ). That's one of the reasons I like this episode in spite of its silliness. Besides, it shows how ineffective negotiation is against barbarians; it only works if your opponents are reasonable.

As for cloud minders, I don't understand why they could not find a gas mask solution to the problem.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Cattivo  
2/26/10 12:39pm

"a Klingon named Kahless the Unforgettable"

This is my last chance to pimp the only good Star Trek novel: #16, The Final Reflection by John M Ford, 1984.

<http://www.amazon.com/Final...>

One of the most impressive things about it, is how Ford took every little reference to Klingons in TOS, and made sure to incorporate all of them. Including little details like Mara's cry that that they have to either expand or die, from Day of the Dove. Ford took "Kahless" from this episode, and had his Klingons use the name in exclamations. Around the middle of the book one of his characters explains to a human "We have one who is not forgotten," and tells the (short) backstory of Kahless.

Ford even took a character from the animated series, and had him play a key role in the finale. It's really an impressive display of immersion.

I don't mean to give the impression that the novel is just a compendium of geekwank. The author won the world fantasy award the prior year, for The Dragon Waiting: he knew his business. But it's impressive how meticulously prepared it is.



TNG discarded most of Ford's ideas about Klingon culture, and gave Kahless a different interpretation. The book is better. Read it already! Used copies for under \$1 on Amazon. (Several for just 1 cent, plus shipping.)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo  
2/26/10 1:07pm

JimZipCode speaks the truth! The Final Reflection IS the only good Star Trek novel, and it does a great job with the Klingons. If they ever really do a Star Trek reboot, they should throw away the ridge-head space mongol klingons and use Ford's instead.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo  
2/26/10 1:20pm

@Cattivo: "Besides, it shows how ineffective negotiation is against barbarians; it only works if your opponents are reasonable."

But that's silly. Negotiation doesn't work if you're in a duel to the death against a small gang of psychopaths who are designed by their creators to be criminally insane. Surak's gambit in that scenario was not logical.

But in the real world, those conditions don't hold. You could negotiate with Genghis Khan. (Col. Green, Kahless, and Zora I don't know). Just don't execute his emissaries... that doesn't end well!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo  
2/26/10 2:55pm

Nebusj, if Kahless et al. were real people, then Surak may have been right. But given that the Rock Lobsters created them as representatives of pure evil, it seems improbable.

Though your analysis of the timing is certainly correct.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Cattivo  
2/27/10 1:38pm

Yup, I've gotta give props to Surak. Stupider solutions have certainly saved the day from time to time on Trek, and he coulda been right. If only he'd checked what page they were on in the script! 45 seconds per page in television, folks!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo  
2/28/10 10:50pm

I'm hardly enough of a masochist to read all of the Star Trek novels, but my intermittent sampling has not uncovered anything decent from Spock Must Die! to Articles of the Federation, the Final reflection excepted.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Cattivo  
3/01/10 10:35am

I will stick up for the novel First Frontier, the ONLY good use of the Guardian outside of City On The Edge Of Forever. Yea, I know that doesn't make it sound promising, but it's very intelligently written, has a genuine, well-thought-out alien race, draws on Trek's background without ever becoming

fanwank, and has the regulars pin-point sharp. Highly recommended, and (IMHO) the best of the TOS crew novels. Give it a go Alurin!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo

3/01/10 11:20am

You make a compelling case, Prole Hole. Perhaps I will overcome my previous disappointments and give it another go. At least Trek novels are quick reads. Hope springs a turtle...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Cattivo

3/04/10 2:07am

I'll echo alurin's "I'm hardly enough of a masochist to read all of the Star Trek novels."

On the one hand, I adored the Alan Dean Foster Star Trek Logs series as a kid. I kind of want to look them up again and re-read them. I read Spock Must Die! and respected it; positively basked in Price of the Phoenix and Fate of the Phoenix. Also, many of the Star Trek novels are written by honest-to-goodness science fiction writers: people like Greg Bear and Vonda McIntyre, Nebula Award winners both. Peter David is another true professional. These people know their business: it would be hard to defend the case that *\*ALL\** of those novels must suck.

On the other hand, they do. By which I mean this: if you take the "good" Star Trek novels, and slowly ratchet up your critical standards, one by one most of them will fall out of your "good" set. Star Trek novels are fanwank, to some degree or another. The worst ones are drivel; even the "good" ones are, in the end, books that only a dedicated fan could love.

(I haven't read First Frontier: maybe it's the exception.)

(Maybe Federation is another exception. Though I doubt it. The Reeves-Stevens seem like fanwankers of the first order.)

You can eventually set your critical standards to a hypothetical top setting, representing someone who is not a fan of Star Trek, and only enjoys literary science fiction. Nebula Award nominees and the like. At this point, every Star Trek novel fails to make the cut: they are all "genre" pieces.

Except The Final Reflection. It's the only Star Trek book I've ever read, that qualifies as a real science fiction novel.

Ironically, it's also about the most meticulously steeped-in-Trek-geekery book you can imagine. McCoy as a baby, Spock's parents at a Babel, Spock as a child. Ford takes every scrap of detail from Klingon appearances in TOS, esp Errand of Mercy and Day of the Dove, and uses them to build out his portrait. He even steals a character from The Animated Series! It's remarkable. Reflection seems (almost) as carefully researched as his "Masque of History", The Dragon Waiting. Top-notch fanwank.

But it transcends the ghetto. Ford has carefully crafted and portrayed an alien race, told an exciting story about them, and in the process shown us something about ourselves. Just like a real science fiction novel. A Star Trek fan would get more out of it, because they'd pick up the references; but it's a book that a non-fan could like.

There should have been a whole series based on this. Gah! TNG was *\*so\** goddam disappointing.

[Reply](#)

- [Andrew Bloom](#)Prole Hole

7/13/17 12:55pm

For whatever it's worth, I think "Yesteryear" from The Animated Series has a pretty damn good use of The Guardian, though I suppose it was no more necessary to the plot than any of the other random time-travel mechanisms the franchise has used before.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [blasmo](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 11:54am

OK, I'll lower the geek bar...

Does anyone remember the DC Star Trek comics, which came out between Wrath of Khan and Search for Spock? Pretty damned good, they were, and the first story arc involved these Rock Lobster guys trapping the Organians so the Klingons could start another war, via a space station hidden in a wormhole. Eventually, Kirk and Spock free the Organians and the two races start fighting and eventually destroy each other (if memory serves me correctly). If there's a compilation of these, I'd love to know about it.

And there's your uber-geek moment of the previous moment, which will soon be mocked and one-upped.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)blasmo  
2/26/10 11:59am

"the first story arc involved these Rock Lobster guys trapping the Organians so the Klingons could start another war, via a space station hidden in a wormhole"

Kinda sounds like they blew their whole wad in the first episode, eh?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)blasmo  
2/26/10 12:20pm

And now we've got our answer to the question of why the organians didn't stop Kruge from attacking the federation science vessel in "The Search for Spock"! thanks Blasmo.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)blasmo  
2/26/10 12:58pm

Was that written by Peter David? I know he wrote a bunch of the DC Star Trek's

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)blasmo  
2/26/10 1:06pm

Written by Mike W Barr, I think.

Here's the Comic Book DB page on that series, which ran from 1984-88:  
<http://www.comicbookdb.com/...>

Issues 1-6 collected in TPB:  
<http://www.amazon.ca/Star-T...>

Issues 9-16 also collected in TPB:  
<http://www.amazon.com/Star-...>

There's also a 2008 DVD-ROM of Star Trek: The Complete Comic Book Collection, for the hard core.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo  
2/26/10 3:05pm

Thanks, JimZipCode. Had no idea these were out.

[Reply](#)

- [Prankster](#)blasmo

2/26/10 5:19pm

Another nerd point: Kahless pops up again on TNG as, basically, the Klingon Jesus.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)blasmo

2/26/10 11:46pm

More like the Klingon George Washington, Simon Bolivar or Frederick the Great, Prankster - a revered political and military leader who united the Klingons.

[Reply](#)

- [Tilden Katz](#)blasmo

2/27/10 9:35am

Yeah, but he dose promise to return in a very messianic fashion.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)blasmo

2/27/10 12:12pm

And I'll correct my original post to point out that it's Saavik, not Spock, who assists Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)blasmo

2/28/10 11:46am

I always thought of Kahless a Klingon version of Quetzalcoatl, who's kinda like a Warrior-Jesus for the Aztecs.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)blasmo

2/28/10 9:06pm

Klingon Jesus would, by definition, have to be some kind of warrior.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [louiebb](#)Zack Handlen

2/26/10 11:44am

Proletariat

The workers are the Proletariat, they don't struggle against it. Their struggle lies against the enfranchised Capitalist class, the Bourgeoisie.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)louiebb

2/26/10 12:26pm

For the lounge suite -

The struggle of class against is a what struggle?

A WHAT struggle?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)louiebb

2/26/10 12:27pm

Damnit.

The struggle of class against class.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)louiebb  
2/26/10 12:47pm

Yeah, I always get those mixed up. Mainly because "proletariat" is easier to spell.

[Reply](#)

- [Prankster](#)louiebb  
2/26/10 2:16pm

You can just call them "Bourgies" if you like. As in, "BOURGIE SCUM!!!!"

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)louiebb  
2/26/10 2:25pm

Great Balls Of Fire?

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)louiebb  
2/26/10 3:45pm

@magnus

A political struggle.

When do I get my lounge suite?

[Reply](#)

- [Washington Irving](#)louiebb  
2/26/10 10:34pm

Who won the English Football Cup in 1949?

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)louiebb  
2/27/10 11:49am

S'all right, Zack. Ya'lls can just say 'boojie' and we understand.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)louiebb  
2/27/10 1:45pm

Can't we just break it down to good guys and bad guys? The whole hat system seemed to work so well in the old westerns, and in the current health-care debate...

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)louiebb  
2/27/10 7:17pm

Shoes for Industry!

[Reply](#)

- [Tim the Enchanter](#)louiebb  
2/28/10 6:48pm

It was in fact, Wolverhampton Wanderers who beat Leicester 3-1.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)louiebb  
3/09/10 9:53pm

Oh, shit.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:28am

RIP Andrew Koenig

And condolences to his family, how sad for any parent to go through that.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 11:38am

No shit. And a press conference and everything. "Hey, the police didn't do anything so we went ahead and found the body ourselves. Oh yeah, and when I saw the body of my son it was readily apparent to me that he committed suicide." Jesus.

[Reply](#)

- [Trurl](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 12:09pm

Seconded.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 1:35pm

Condolences, best wishes.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 2:05pm

God, so awful. His statement to the press was excruciatingly sad...

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Eight Cats](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 2:28pm

I thought it was especially touching that Walter Koenig seemed to be making a point of mentioning the people who helped him look for his son by name, as if he wanted to recognize the people who cared about Andrew . He showed an enormous amount of class at a terrible time. My condolences to him and all of Andrew Koenig's family and friends.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)The Pizza Monster  
2/26/10 3:56pm

"Hey, the police didn't do anything so we went ahead and found the body ourselves."

That's because they've all pretty much been put on strictly-Olympics-related duties.

Think of that the next time some naive tool thinks that it would be a good idea to bring that resource-sucking circus to YOUR town.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)The Pizza Monster

2/26/10 5:30pm

The main reason I'm glad Chicago did not win - besides how we would probably end up footing the bill, and I don't want to deal with construction for six years, when we've already dealt with it not stop on the roadways for about ten years now.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)The Pizza Monster

2/26/10 5:58pm

I agree - that's precisely why Denver turned down the olympics back in the '70's. hell, I was pissed off by the democratic convention, let alone the fucking olympics!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster

2/27/10 1:55pm

Very sad, and a horrible thing for any parent...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster

3/01/10 9:53am

Late, but adding my condolences as well. And just handled so well by the family.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen

2/26/10 12:00pm

Casting Couch

Before this Trek series recap ends I have a question about something that has been said many times here in Comments. That is, that Roddenberry used the casting couch on "all" of the speaking-part guest actresses on the series. Is this really true? I'm interested in hearing more about this, and what is the source material for this? Does this include Joan Collins, Sally Kellerman, Diana Muldaur, Mariette Hartley and Barbara Babcock ? (Off the top of my head - what other Name actresses were on the show?) I'm not quibbling about all vs many or whatever - I'm just curious about how far this went and how reliable is the allegation. Enquiring minds want to know.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)magnus

2/26/10 1:36pm

Couch: Somehow I never doubted that.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)magnus

2/26/10 3:46pm

I would add that Diana Muldaur was not only in two TOS episodes but was also the featured guest star in Roddenberry's 1974 TV movie/failed series pilot Planet Earth - she led a matriarchal society - and perhaps they were simply friends who respected each other. By the time of Planet Earth (a somewhat revised version of the earlier series pilot Genesis II, with John Saxon taking over for Alex Cord in the lead role of Dylan Hunt), Muldaur had often been seen as Dennis Weaver's classy girlfriend in McCloud. I have a very difficult time believing she would have placed herself on anyone's couch to get a role.

(Oh, and in Genesis II the featured guest star was Mariette Hartley - with two navels!)

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)magnus  
2/26/10 4:03pm

Roll, roll, roll in ze hay...

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)magnus  
2/26/10 10:18pm

I just extended that to how Gates McFadden, Marina Sirtis and Denise Crosby got their parts in TNG, and it made me vomit in my mouth a little.

[Reply](#)

- [D.R. Darke](#)magnus  
2/26/10 11:52pm

I never heard \*that\* about Roddenberry. I thought he was in a long-term affair w/Majel Barrett while still married to his first wife - which was why she originally appeared as "Number One", the Spock-like ENTERPRISE First Officer in "The Cage/The Menagerie", the female computer voice, and as Nurse Chapel after dying her hair blonde.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)magnus  
2/27/10 1:34pm

I read a pretty long biography of Roddenberry that criticized him for being a horn-dog, and cheating on Majel (and his wife before that) all the time, but not a word about that. Really, we say that often here in comments?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:42am

SPACE LINCOLN!  
SPACE LINCOLN!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 12:54pm

Too bad they didn't send him against Space Jefferson Davis!

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 3:29pm

Screw that! Send him up against Space Stephen Douglas, and we'd have the most epic Space Debates of all time!

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 9:16pm

Space Jefferson Davis was on the Rock Lobster feed a couple of weeks ago. He stabbed Siddhartha in the throat with a pen, but Charlemagne smashed his skull in with a blacksmith's hammer. Gwyneth Paltrow is in the ad for next week's show.

[Reply](#)



- [Soylent Green](#)Right Wingnut

2/26/10 10:08pm

If the Rock Lobster had conjured Space Teddy Roosevelt, it would have been a short episode. I bet Space George Washington would have kicked some Genghis ass, too.

[Reply](#)

- [Tilden Katz](#)Right Wingnut

2/27/10 9:30am

"How do you kill a giant stone Abraham Lincoln?"

"um....Build a giant....John Wilkes Booth?"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut

2/27/10 11:11am

Whoa, man, too soon!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

2/27/10 1:48pm

I'd like to see those Space Lincoln/Space Douglas debates as long as they're on Space Soap Boxes...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen

2/26/10 11:50am

Surak is an idiot.

There is no way that the guy in this episode is the father of Vulcan. He would have been killed a thousand times over with those poor self-preservation skills.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/26/10 12:25pm

Yup. Jimmy Carter is more fearsome than that guy.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/26/10 2:51pm

Holy Crap, now that I think of it- Bill Clinton IS Captain Kirk.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/26/10 2:53pm

Sorry, Bill, but Kirk's more of a JFK kind of guy.

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)john barleycorn must diet

2/26/10 3:51pm

I'd totally go with Bill Clinton over JFK.

A total natural at his job, but unable to keep it in his pants.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/26/10 5:45pm

JFK had more troubles keeping it in his pants than Clinton.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/27/10 1:43pm

JFK certainly had better taste in women.. Iswear, when I'm President, the line is gonna form on the left...

I guess to really know, you'd have to go back to the planets he was on, find out if there are any little green Kirks and if the women are writing tell-alls and setting up lines of handbags. If so, Clinton...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Tarzan of Harlem](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 11:32am

The Network wasn't quite ready ...

David Gerrold, the writer of the Cloud Minders, originally intended the episode to be about class struggle and it ended very differently. From Gerrold's book:

In the end, as the Enterprise breaks orbit, Kirk remarks on this, as if inaugurating the problem-solving procedure is the same as solving the problem. He pats himself on the back and says, "We've got them talking. It's just a matter of time until they find the right direction." And McCoy who is standing right next to him, looks at him and says, "Yes, but how many children will die in the meantime?"

This answer was not a facile one; the viewer was meant to be left as uneasy as Kirk.

- But in the telecast version, the whole problem was caused by Zenite gas in the mines, and "if we can just get them troglytes to all wear gas masks, then they'll be happy little darkies and they'll pick all the cotton we need..."

Somehow, I think it lost something in the translation."

Sorry about the lengthy cut'n'paste, but GAW-DAMN.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Tarzan of Harlem  
2/26/10 12:01pm

Is it true that a bunch of the Southern-state affiliates refused to air "Plato's Stepchildren" because of the Kirk/Uhura kiss? Anyone have any facts to back this up?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Tarzan of Harlem  
2/26/10 12:28pm

per Wikipedia, the network was concerned about that before hand, which is why they wanted to film a non-kissing version. But the negative reaction never matierialized.

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)Tarzan of Harlem  
2/26/10 5:02pm

The South has never had a problem with white men kissing black women. Goes on all the time. Black men kissing white women? Now there's a problem.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Tarzan of Harlem

2/26/10 5:13pm

I for one am glad you cut and pasted this. That ending always seemed inappropriate, and curiously evasive of the issue.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#) Tarzan of Harlem

2/27/10 11:47am

KAPOW!!!

Insightful. Now they just privately stream the porn and masturbate angrily.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#) Zack Handlen

2/26/10 12:05pm

Eh.

I don't care too much for these episodes. I agree with a "C" rating for The Cloudminders. It's just not a great episode.

The Savage Curtain bothered me even as a kid. It is a good bit of fun, but it is a pretty stupid episode. Space Lincoln will always be awesome. Surak is pretty goddamned weak for a guy who supposedly "tamed" Vulcan. It did give me a line I use anytime I need help: "Help me Spock!" One interesting thing is that even if I didn't know Curtain was penned by Roddenberry, I could have probably guessed that it was.

Zach gets an "A." Looking forward to next weeks episodes!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#) St. God

2/26/10 12:20pm

Cloud Minders is one of the few strong episodes in season 3. It wouldn't be out of place in the other seasons. Derivative or not, it has a strong storyline. It reminds me a little bit of Taste of Armageddon: Kirk and his gang are so much more rough-&-tumble than the planetary society, that when he decides to roll up his sleeves and straighten some shit out, they have no defense. You think you know war? Buddy, I'll show you some war.

Plus Kirk gets to punch the planet's ruling guy in the face. That's much more satisfying than some episodes, where he only gets to outwit him.

The best scenes are in the mine in the 3rd act. Shat sweating, adjusting his grip on the phaser. Dig! Vanna seeing Kirk & Plasus degenerate into ignorant savages, realizing that suddenly she's the calm reasonable one, and thinking hey: there really is a gas.

I also like that Spock starts to regard Droxine as a child, for her stance on the Troglytes; and at the end Droxine realizes this.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#) St. God

2/26/10 12:22pm

On the other hand, Savage Curtain is a steaming pile of poo.

It's shocking to me that Zack would watch these two episodes together and give Curtain a higher grade. How awful.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#) St. God

2/26/10 5:51pm

Cloud Minders had a good setup and didn't deliver. Savage Curtain was insipid but had memorable moments. Unfortunately they're the wrong kind of memorable.

The hag lady was supposedly a mad scientist... so why was she chosen to represent evil in primitive combat? Seems like a poor match. What could she possibly offer her team in this context? Same goes for Abraham Lincoln. Why not make him a young and capable Lincoln if you made him to be a gladiator? Maybe there's some clever subtext I'm missing but the whole exercise seems stupid.

In this corner, three warlords and a creepy biologist... in that corner, two naval officers and two elderly administrative gentlemen. Ding Ding! This has to be the weirdest god-like race to ever stage a fight. If your experiments are going to be this elaborate, they should also be compelling.

It's a shame the series had to end with so many ridiculous clunkers. I do really like the next (and last) two episodes though.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)St. God  
2/27/10 1:32pm

Very funny observation, Ellsworth. I have to say, I rewatched Savage Curtain a few weeks ago and it was much better than I had remembered. I take all your points gladly, but I still think it works in it's weird, idiosyncratic way...

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 3:56pm

The Animated Series

What about reviewing the Animated Series? Technically, it comes next, and while the episodes sometimes feel like outlines, I'd bet that a lot of people here have also read the Alan Dean Foster adaptations (for my money, still the best written Trek and totally canon, to boot).

Even if they haven't, the Animated Series is still unique and fascinating on its own!

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)barefoot jim  
2/26/10 5:35pm

I vote for this. I love them, in spite of their corniness and poor animation. It's fun seeing non-humanoid aliens in the Trek universe.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)barefoot jim  
2/26/10 10:22pm

Is TAS available on video or Interwebs?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)barefoot jim  
2/26/10 11:29pm

yeah, it's on DVD and Blu-ray. I picked up the DVD for \$15 at walmart before Xmas.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)barefoot jim  
2/27/10 1:23pm

I think Zach already said he's not gonna do it, because he saw a few and found them a bit boring...I've got the DVDs and in some ways they are much better than I remembered, but the animation really lets you down. The idea of animated science fiction is something that really should have been better taken advantage of back then: No more men in rubber suits! Any FX you can imagine!

Now, of course, 'live-action' is becoming ever-closer to animation..

I'll meet you in the Uncanny Valley!

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 11:51am

Space Lincoln was Terrible.

Honestly, the episode concept wasn't bad, and if Space Lincoln just showed up on the Enterprise, or signaled them from the surface, or something, the episode probably would have been fine. But that dumbass chair floating in space blew this out of the water before it even got started.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/26/10 11:55am

THEY'RE...NOT...JUST...WORDS!

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/26/10 2:26pm

Eee pleb nista

[Reply](#)

- [Kapow](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/26/10 5:16pm

As a kid I thought Space Lincoln was a wimp. The real Lincoln was very willing to fight and kill for an idea.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)john barleycorn must diet  
2/27/10 1:41pm

I never really believed he was floating in space. I kinda took it as some kind of holographic projection...

But pretty silly, yeah, all in an effort to make the audience gasp and say 'But how can that be?!!!'

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:52am

TNG

Zach, any idea how long a break you plan on taking between TOS and your upcoming TNG write-ups? Are you going to write about anything else in the go-between, like you did with The Prisoner?

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 12:18pm

I think he was going to cover movies 5 and 6 first, and then jump right into TNG. That's just based on my recollection from the comments about 3 weeks ago.

Personally, I can't wait for the "Final Frontier" review. My son's been calling me out on my denials that a fifth Star Trek movie even existed for months now, and so I finally broke down and watched it with him last night. There are so many things wrong with that movie that I can't wait to comment on (starting with the triple-breasted cat stripper and going downhill from there) - I need the movie to be fresh in my memory for optimal mocking.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 4:32pm

That's right- how could I forget the upcoming review of the horrible ST V and the excellent ST VI. Still, I wonder if he'll do a break in between those and TNG.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut  
2/26/10 5:59pm

yeah, but they didn't get it nearly as right as teh triple breasted whore in "Total Recall"!

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy Eight Cats](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 2:51pm

Comprehensive discussion?

Zack, is there any reason that you couldn't devote a week to a follow-up discussing the three seasons as a whole? This has been my favorite AV Club feature and judging from the comments, I'm not alone in that. I think a lot of us would love to see you discuss TOS as an overall experience.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Jimmy Eight Cats  
2/26/10 3:33pm

Can we just keep these open and discuss TOS endlessly? And this is my my favorite feature too.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Jimmy Eight Cats  
2/26/10 5:54pm

I like this idea. Some wrap-up would be appropriate, especially since the tone of TNG is so different.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Jimmy Eight Cats  
2/27/10 1:28pm

I found last week's discussion of why we all still love the old series so much was very interesting, and I'd love to hear Zach's thoughts on this as well...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 3:44pm

Pilot Light

Are we going to look at the pilot outside of TOS' only two-parter? (maybe we have already and my memory's going, if so, please forgive me)...

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/26/10 4:10pm

Sort of implicitly reviewed as part of The Menagerie.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/27/10 1:27pm

Yes, but there are important differences: I think the whole framing device used to incorporate the pilot is worthy of discussion apart from the pilot itself. Other decisions as well— Coulour or Black and White, Pike vs Kirk, Malachi as Asmiral whatshisname... Asd well as exterior things like the idea of recycling, how this may have played into creating the idea of a world with rules that are pretty much followed to this day (even set/costume-wise— check out Pike's wheel chair in the new film) for better or worse... Just to name a few off the top of my head..

Then the episode itself, with my vote for cutest Trek Babe of 'em all!

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/28/10 6:30pm

Zack really hit on a lot of that stuff in the review of The Menagerie.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 11:58am

"Nor I a work of art"

Spock might have been mildly rapey towards Droxamine or Dramamine or Diphenhydramine or whatever her name is. (I actually didn't find her all that attractive - though that's an awesome outfit - and I would have been more rapey towards the other chick).

Space Lincoln seemed a little rapey towards Uhura.

Colonel Green seemed like a hardcore rapey type.

That's the best I can do.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God  
2/26/10 12:11pm

Really? You missed the "unpleasant" fight between Kirk and Vanna? That's the rapiest thing on TOS since The Enemy Within.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)St. God  
2/26/10 12:21pm

I think the rapey thing is stretching a little thin...

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)St. God  
2/26/10 2:49pm

Yeah, you guys better let that one go before we get into TNG. Enough is enough.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 4:22pm

It's a Gas! (but why?)

You ask the question, and then answerit in the following sentence:

"(some of them work as servants on the cloud city, which is how Vanna ended up being away from the gas's effects long enough to get her brains back)"

This is the initializing incident, which allows for the story to unravel. If they were all too stupid (genetically or otherwise) to care, no one would have rebelled, or spoken to Kirk... Sometimes boobs are not enough (only in fiction though, not in real life))

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/26/10 4:25pm

Not to seem too obtuse, I do get the 'chickening out on the big moral argument' issue. I just think the question is clear as regards the plot.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/26/10 5:58pm

This was the middle of Vietnam, so no US network show was gonna come out in favor of proletariats rising up. The gas was a clumsy workaround.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
2/27/10 1:20pm

Interesting idea...

[Reply](#)

- [EsotericCD](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 2:27pm

Zach, a geeky MST3K correction I must geekily make:

You seem to suggest that the "Help Me" riff from MST3K originates in a reference to "The Savage Curtain," or at least that's the way it comes across. Not so! It's a riff on a memorably weird scene from one of the movies they did, "Rocket Attack, USA."

I feel ashamed of myself for being unable to resist correcting you on this.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)EsotericCD  
2/26/10 4:01pm

Well, they actually say "Help me, Spock!" in some of the riffs I've heard, so I'm sticking with my point.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)EsotericCD  
2/26/10 5:34pm

In defense of Zack, here's a quote from the mst3k wiki for the episode Eegah:

" \* "Help me! Spock!"

In the Star Trek episode The Savage Curtain a recreation of Surak, the father of modern Vulcan civilization calls out for aid in a similar, melodramatic fashion as in this episode. "

<http://mst3k.wikia.com/wiki...>

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 1:31pm



Droxine's dress  
Right??

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)JimZipCode  
2/26/10 2:23pm

Probably worth a letter grade all by itself.

[Reply](#)

- [MeanderJim](#)ZipCode  
2/27/10 12:45am

Oh heck yes.

<http://images2.fanpop.com/i...>

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 12:59pm

Space Lincoln and the Disruptors  
Best 80's New Wave Band EVAR

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
2/26/10 3:53pm

Actually, I think that they're playing Coachella this year.

[Reply](#)

- [King Bastard](#)Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:41am

Dang  
Spock's pimp hand is probably pretty large.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)King Bastard  
2/26/10 11:00am

Spock gets ALL the space nurses

[Reply](#)

- [Sailordude](#)Zack Handlen  
12/23/14 4:37pm

You have given up hope of finding a lost "classic"? Meaning this reviewer has never watched Star Trek before?  
Epic fail. I'm not going to listen to a kid who never grew up with this show and is used to CGI effects everywhere.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
3/02/10 9:08am

RECITAL: All the TOS EPISODES

I'm sure most of you have seen this by now, but it's kinda fun: A fan (herein described as a 'nerd') knows the titles of all the episodes by heart:

<http://www.avclub.com/video...>

[Reply](#)

- [hulk6785](#) Zack Handlen  
2/26/10 10:43pm

I For One...

Cannot wait to read Zach's thoughts on Star Trek V. Oh My God! That movie was brutal.

[Reply](#)

## ***Star Trek: "All Our Yesterdays"/"Turnabout Intruder"***

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 5, 2010

[Comments \(180\)](#)



And so here we are—the final two aired episodes of the original *Star Trek*. One is decent, and the other is flat out horrible. Neither offer much in the way of resolution to the *Enterprise's* five year mission, neither have any great revelation about the cast or their adventures, there are no important crew deaths or marriages. That sexual tension between Chekov and Sulu? Totally left hanging. Any investment in art involves a certain amount of risk on the part of the audience, but the dangers in falling for a television series are especially severe. Shows are prematurely cancelled all the time, or else actors depart for better roles, creative teams mutate into unrecognizable hackery, plots grow too complex to ever be made sense of. But man, no matter how many times the Fonz jumps that shark, the sting never really gets easier to take. It's like I woke up one morning, and *Trek* was already gone, its clothes packed, and the only thing left in its absence was a hole in my chest where my heart used to be. (Er, I think that was my heart. The throbbing, pounding thing. Had a lot of valves, and so forth.)

But then, it's hard to feel *that* bad. It's not like *Trek* disappeared off the face of the planet after "Turnabout Intruder." The cosmos we glimpsed in the show's three seasons is still with us today. Hell, the plots were so familiar at this point that I'm sure I could start making up my own to review. Tune in next week, as Kirk battles a mysterious alien force that's turned everyone on the *Enterprise* an ugly shade of purple! And don't forget Spock's adventures on the Planet Where Some Vaguely Asian Actors Pretend To Be Samurai!

"All Our Yesterdays" doesn't win huge points for originality. Apart from a clever hook, the meat of the story is a mix of "City On The Edge Of Forever" and "This Side Of Paradise," with a dash of "Amok Time" for spice. But I enjoyed all those episodes immensely, and even when I recognize the familiar mechanics coming into play here, they still work in some clumsy, awkward fashion. The writing plays it smart by giving Nimoy all the best lines, and we even get another doomed love affair for our favorite Vulcan, sidelining Kirk into action hero mode and casting McCoy as the nagging voice of reason. We've got a female lead who doesn't come off like a fool, we've got a threat which, though pretty ridiculous when you think about it, is actually pressing, and we have James T. beating up an old man. How can you say no to that?

Once again, the *Enterprise* is called on to make sure everyone's left a solar system before the whole place goes kerblooey. And once again, I have to question Starfleet's resource management skills. There's no indication that anyone in the system called for help, and while Kirk, Spock, and McCoy beam down to Sarpeidon, the only planet in the area known to have sentient life, we eventually learn that the Sarpeidons had their own method of escape, with no need for outside intervention whatsoever. So why this mission for our heroes? I can understand them playing rescue if a distress signal had been sent, but the crew is seriously over-qualified for mopping up work.

I'm not sure it's even possible to adequately "mop up" an entire planet, given how unreliable Spock's computers are. Has anyone ever questioned the fact that it never reads life signs properly? You could almost believe that Spock is making everything up as he goes as a test of humanity's blind obedience to authority (at some point he'll ask Scotty to administer electric shocks every time Kirk gets a question about geography wrong, and it'll have something to do with Nazis). Kirk, Spock, and McCoy aren't on the planet ten minutes before Spock's saying there's no intelligent life around—and oh hey, wouldn't you know it but there totally is. An old man named Mr. Atoz keeps the library running, along with a small collection of automatons that look exactly like him, which leads to some confusion that really doesn't have any purpose from a plot perspective, but is vaguely amusing.

So, where the heck did everybody go? We're about two commercial breaks in before we get an answer. Atoz's library works as a time machine that can send a traveler back to any point in Sarpeidon's recorded history. Kirk gets stuck in what looks like a production of *Cyrano De Bergerac*, while Spock and McCoy, in a misguided attempt to rescue him, find themselves on a snow covered, windswept mountain. The way to home to their own time isn't clear, and none of them realize what's happened at first—but all three are in danger, both immediate and, well, the not quite immediate but still rather pressing.

"Yesterdays" is a big of a grab-bag of an episode, throwing out pieces of story at intervals, and not all of those pieces stick. We never really understand Atoz's constant confusion, and while the planet's evacuation method is unique, to put it mildly, the time portal is used more as an excuse to screw around with our heroes than as a concept to be explored. Kirk's plotline isn't bad, and there's something funny about watching a whore who looks like Phyllis Diller in a red wig screech at him, but there's not much conflict to be found. He gets arrested, he finds somebody who knows what's going on, he convinces that somebody to help him escape, and then, back on Sarpeidon, he forces Atoz to help him find Spock and McCoy. All very straightforward.

I was much more invested in Spock and McCoy's adventure on Mt. Crumpet. After McCoy is overcome by the weather, a strange figure leads Spock, carrying the unconscious doctor, back to her cave. The figure is Zarabeth, a woman banished into isolation for political reasons—which is a darn clever idea. If you could be sure you weren't in a "butterfly effect" universe, how convenient would it be to stick people in some ancient era when you didn't want to deal with them anymore? Your conscience would stay relative clean, because hey, *you* didn't kill them. (Of course, this only works if you're the only one with access to a time machine.)

Anyway, Zarabeth is a hottie, and she's immediately taken with Spock, and Spock with her. It's terribly romantic, both of them stranded in the distant past from everything and everyone they know, her wearing a bizarrely skimpy outfit despite the sub-zero temperatures (I'm sure it's warmer in the cave, but seriously), him struggling with loneliness and a sudden surge of emotion brought on by being transported to a time when his race was still heavy on killing, light on sky cake. (Atoz is supposed to "prepare" people before they go back in time by biologically adjusting them to fit whatever era they travel to, and since he didn't do that for our heroes, all three are in danger of coming undone.)

While it's a card the show has played over and over throughout its run, when done well like it is here, Spock's struggle with his darker side is exciting and moving. Zarabeth is arguably a fantasy creation (unless the caves of the arctic are full of beautiful women desperate for companionship, I wouldn't know, I've never been there, and the elves won't return my calls), but I appreciated her straightforward sincerity, and I found her instant attachment to Spock authentic. *Trek* has shown itself fully capable of wringing out strong emotion from even the most ludicrous of situations, and the mini-tragedy we see here, which ends with one of the show's starkest final lines, is powerful even if it is brief. Spock's struggles with McCoy are also exciting: when the good doctor makes one of his usual quips, Spock grabs him by the throat, and says, "'I don't like that. I don't think I ever did, and now I'm sure.'" I would've loved to've seen more of that.

"Yesterdays" could've been a much better episode if it had focused more on Spock, Zarabeth, and McCoy, initially showing Spock as his usual competent self, than gradually moving the focus over to McCoy as he struggles to handle an increasingly dangerous colleague who's really not happy at all about all the "pointy ear" jokes. As it is, it's the same old season three story, strong scenes sitting next to affably mediocre ones, and, biting ending aside, it doesn't hold together well enough for me to give it as high marks as I would've liked. But it's not bad, and what's good in it is very good indeed.

There's not a lot of good in "Turnabout Intruder," and sadly, what little highlights one can find (Shatner's acting is... something) are buried under the episode's painfully trite foray into sexual politics. Feminism has never been one of the series' biggest concerns, to put it mildly, but we've had some memorable female characters on the show, and at least you can pretend the writers are trying to get the whole "equality" thing, even if they keep playing it as "Daddy is very proud of all the little girls out there!" But in "Turnabout," even the illusion of respect goes out the window. I'd been warned about this one, but man. You can hear "Captain Kirk gets taken over by a power-hungry woman who's basically the male fear of female dominance personified," but until you see it for yourself, you just ain't feelin' the burn.

The *Enterprise* responds to a distress signal, yadda yadda yadda, science expedition, radiation poisoning, dead guys, weird alien artifacts, etc. The only real important thing here is that Janice Lester, the head of the expedition, has a History with Kirk, they had a relationship while they were both in Starfleet Academy, and she really, really, really wants to be a ship captain. So bad. I'm not sure it's ever explicitly stated, but in all three seasons of the show, we've never seen a woman captain. So Janice most likely ran into the fabled glass ceiling at some point, and she's understandably frustrated about it. It's hard not to be bitter when the world of tomorrow treats you like a citizen of the Dark Ages.

The problem here isn't that Janice is frustrated or bitter or disappointed. The problem is, Janice is completely freakin' insane. Outside her obsessive, grasping quest for control, she doesn't have a character. Everything we learn about her expresses her fixation, from her intricate knowledge of the *Enterprise* (intricate knowledge, I might add, that doesn't prevent her from being completely incompetent when she actually gains command) to her manipulations of her idiot lover, Coleman, to her willingness to murder her colleagues to achieve her ultimate goal. She's like the Man In Black on *Lost*, only slightly more implausible than a mythical being that can transform itself into a murderous pillar of smoke. And the truly terrifying thing is, whoever created her probably thought they were being psychologically acute.

Considering she has to deal with all those troublesome lady parts (we never hear much about sex changes of the future, do we), Janice is forced to take, let's say, an unorthodox path towards achieving her goals. Hey, remember all those body swap movies? *Vice-Versa*, *18 Again*, *Like Father*, *Like Son*, *Freaky Friday*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, etc. Turns out they all came from the same planet, and Janice has decided to go to the source so she can swap bodies with Kirk, take over his ship, and murder him for breaking her heart so many years ago. Oh, you crazy ladies. Just because we don't call doesn't mean you have to profane the laws of space, time, and common sense! You'll find somebody else. We just had this thing, y'know. You shouldn't scream like that, it makes you look mannish.

Against all reason, Janice's plan works... for a while. But she sows the seeds of her own defeat early on, when she's unable to kill the now unconscious and helplessly female Kirk. Not only is Janice a monomaniacal psychopath, she's incompetent to boot; she manages a few good mwa-ha-ha moments in "Turnabout," but they're all undone by her inability to make the logical move and strangle the man she's spent the last god-only-knows-how-many years despising. Because of course, deep down, she's still totally into him. It's always nice when what should be a sign of humanity and warmth instead looks like childish weakness.

All right, all right, there's other stuff going on in "Turnabout," I guess. While Spock catches on to Janice's duplicity fairly quickly (man, that mind meld comes in handy), both he and the real Kirk have a hard time proving their case. It's not a completely terrible idea that Janice is able to use the machinations of Starfleet justice to hold onto her power, and force an increasingly suspicious crew to follow her orders. The problem is, Janice is so clearly and totally out of her mind in Kirk's body that all the measured talk of the need for "proof" from Spock and the rest comes off as padding. The characters have seen enough complete insanity on their five year mission that a body-swap barely registers above hiccups on the crazy scale, and Janice is so clearly off her rocker that even if McCoy can't believe souls were exchanged, he has more than enough reason to question "Kirk"'s sanity. Stirring as it is to see Chekov and Sulu joining forces in opposition to the fake captain's demands, the episode would've been helped if Janice hadn't been so immediately and utterly incompetent. But I guess that's why women can't handle command, y'know?

There's also Dr. Coleman, Janice's begrudging co-conspirator. He helps her kill everybody, and then, once they're aboard the *Enterprise*, he demands to be put in charge of Kirk-in-Janice's body's health, to keep anyone else from getting too close. (This another blatantly implausible development. Would McCoy ever tolerate being pushed aside like this? And not just pushed aside—Janice-in-Kirk flat out forbids McCoy from seeing Kirk-in-Jance at all. This is an order that only makes sense if you're trying to hide something.) What, exactly, is Coleman getting out of this? The two were lovers when Janice had all her lady bits, but I doubt she meant for the body swapping with Kirk to be temporary. Did Coleman not think through what was going to happen once she got her wish? There was something about him getting fired for incompetence, so I guess you could argue that he just wants his old job back, but the gender change makes for some weird relationship dynamics.

And talk about your cop-out endings. At first it looks like Spock's going to work some kind of back-rub mojo to break the transfer between Kirk and Janice, but instead, the two are restored to their normal selves almost incidentally, like "Oh crap, we've got end credits and this can't be a two parter." And to put the final cap on Janice's humiliation, once she's defeated, nobody's angry at her. Killing the people she worked with, trying to kill a starship captain, essentially stealing a whole starship? Awww, it's okay. Poor sad crazy lady, she wasn't really in control of herself, so we'll just pity her instead of treating her like a human being with any reasonable responsibility for her actions. Blech. I love *Star Trek*, and one thoroughly wormy apple won't ruin the whole bunch for me, but man. Talk about going out on a sour note.

#### Grades:

"All Our Yesterdays": B

"Turnabout Intruder": D-

#### Stray Observations:

- Spock's ""It should be an equation. I should be able to resolve this problem logically." is one of those "too close for comfort" lines, at least for me.
- Also, this is just brutal: "Yes, it did happen. But that was 5,000 years ago. And she is dead now."
- I've complained about McCoy before, but I love how he has absolutely no impulse control when it comes to criticism. He's so damned sure he's right that it never occurs to him needling an emotionally and mentally unstable Spock might not be a good idea.
- We don't see any of the secondary crew in "Yesterdays," and Uhura wasn't in "Turnabout," which makes "The Savage Curtain" her final episode. Trivia!
- Next week, unless there's some shake up, I'll be looking at *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier* and *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*.

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (180)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [JimZipCode](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:32am

Turnabout Intruder, Feminism, and Command

The notion that Turnabout Intruder is some anti-feminist tract that sets women back decades, is based on two things. The first is Shat's performance: the nail-buffing, leg-crossing, etc. The other is the story structure, where the only woman we see who rises to a position of command in Starfleet (whether legally or the way Janice Lester does it), turns out to be a psycho bitch on the worst PMS rampage you can imagine, and she can't handle it. She casually murders people to get the job, she's obsessed about her ex-boyfriend, and she's bitchy when people disagree with her - bitchy to the point of court-martialling them and trying to have them executed.

Frankly, neither of those things bother me. Now, I first saw this episode as a little kid, and I bought into it completely. So maybe my judgement is off. But I re-watched the episode last year, and those criticisms strike me as hypersensitive.

First, Shat's performance. It is utterly silly to ascribe some kind of anti-feminist message to Shatner's acting in this episode, when his acting thruout Star Trek's run became a cultural touchstone of parody. Shatning in every other episode is our society's definition of being a ham: but in *\*this\** episode it is an anti-feminist screed? Nonsense.

And frankly, I think Shatner does fine work here. His performance is skilful and effective. I mean, you have to keep in mind that this is a pulp TV show. There is not a lot of scope for subtle storytelling. This episode hangs on the non-visual idea that Kirk's body has been hijacked by someone else, and to sell that idea they have Shatner do something IN EVERY SCENE to remind us. And yeah, they go with visual shorthand: which is to say, cliché's. Buffing his nails and whatnot. Guess what? That shit works. That's just brutally effective visual storytelling. 40 years later we might choose to tell this story differently. But if we eschew the cliché's and stereotypes, we probably won't be telling it as economically.

The other criticism has more substance, that the only woman in command we ever see in TOS is a PMS psycho bitch. But again I give this episode a pass, and on much the same grounds: that this is an adventure TV show, not a womens studies journal, and they only have so much time to get their storytelling done. Star Trek shows us a woman who is capable of running the Enterprise, plus shrewd & ballsy enough to wrest command from Kirk. That's to the show's credit. But by the time that situation is established, we have less than 40 mins of storytelling time left, and a lot to get done, and frankly we only have room for one villain per episode.

That was one of the issues with Harlan Ellison's original version of City on the Edge of Forever: they simplified Ellison's script, pruning extra characters and paring the story down to one straight thru-line. Same thing here. One may want a more nuanced examination of the qualities women would bring to command: and on that basis, you will certainly be disappointed with the episode. But Star Trek doesn't have that kind of time. They have one villain, the major new character, and they have the primal storytelling need to have a bad situation escalate to worse and finally to a crisis. Of course she's going to be a dangerous psycho.

The other major possibility is, it turns out that Janice Lester is up to the job. She goes quietly about her business of being the Captain, makes no mistakes, has her doctor boyfriend murder Kirk in Janice's body before they get to Starbase, arrests him for it, and lives happily ever after as the Captain. That has a chilling believability to it. But it wouldn't exactly fit within the template of a Star Trek episode. (Would have been a hell of an end to the series though, wouldn't it??)

It's got nothing to do with feminism, and everything to do with running a TV show.

The anti-feminist complaints about this episode are hyper-sensitive and hysterical. Typical for a woman. ;-)

#### [Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 11:35am

Turnabout Intruder is one of the best episodes of the series. Not top 3, but probably top 10. It aspires to being a profoundly feminist episode, and I bought into that as a little kid. I still do.

What makes it a feminist screed is the premise that we have a capable woman who has the chops to be a starship captain, but is held back from that job by the prejudiced chauvinist Starfleet admirals who only promote men to be captains. This drives her so insane that she becomes a murderer and hijacker. We're supposed to infer that she used to be a sweet reasonable girl, because she & Kirk used to have a serious relationship. The prejudice/chauvinism/etc that holds women back from work they are capable of (and would love) is enough to drive a sweet reasonable girl to violence.

It's pretty simple stuff, but it's potent. The science fiction setting gives the setup its power, because rather than just being a bitter old maid, this character can hijack the life she was denied.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 11:37am

The rest of the episode is wonderful. I love how the officers react to PMS Kirk. They question him respectfully. They offer pointed suggestions, but always in just the right tone of voice. "Sir, may I suggest - ?" And when he crosses the line, they are shocked. You get a real sense of the ship being a community of professionals.

This episode is a great counterpoint to a number of other scenes throught the series. Think of all the briefing room scenes, where the Enterprise has encountered a threat and Kirk calls a meeting - two good examples are Balance of Terror and Corbomite Maneuver. I'm especially reminded of Obsession. There's a key scene in the middle of that episode, where Spock and McCoy think Kirk is behaving erratically and not doing his duty, and they go speak to him about it in his quarters. They engage in a formal dance in that scene, with Spock using a prescribed speech right out of the Starfleet manual, and Kirk acknowledges their concern. "Alright gentlemen," he says, and he explains himself.

Compare that scene to this episode. Spock & McCoy come to Kirk with questions about some decisions he's made, and he responds VERY differently.

Even a starship captain governs by consent of the governed. Kirk earns his leadership, almost every episode, by making decisions his officers and crew believe in. He says things like "this is not a democracy", and yet at the same time he's busy building consensus and getting input from his senior staff etc. None of that is really obvious, until this episode throws it all into stark relief. Suddenly scenes from prior episodes take on an extra edge. Think of the scene in Doomsday Machine, where Spock will relieve Decker on the spot if Decker behaves suicidally with the Enterprise. Also think about the scenes in the middle of Enemy Within, where Spock urges Good Kirk not to reveal any weakness to the crew. Kirk needs to keep the consent of the governed operating in his favor, and he needs to keep track of this constantly. What Turnabout Intruder highlights is, Kirk does that almost effortlessly. We don't really notice his automatically doing it, until someone else is in his place.

And then everything goes to hell! It shatters the officers and crew when there's an open rift between Spock & Kirk. It's the captain's credibility vs the executive officer's credibility - and probably only Spock could pull this off. Even without knowing the whole truth, the officers slowly unite against Kirk. Just fabulous stuff.

I'm a little disappointed at the way the episode abruptly ends. I would have liked to see this play out a bit longer. Of course, Star Trek doesn't have a lot of time for leisurely endings. They do one nice trick, just a brief shot that collapses a bunch of storytelling into an image we see for just a couple seconds. Janice-in-Kirk's-Body on the bridge has a moment where it seems like Kirk is trying to swap back into his body. We see a brief shot of the good guys in the brig: Kirk in Janice's body, Spock, McCoy and Scotty. The officers are all standing around Janice's body, and Spock has his hands in some kind of Vulcan telepathic position. There is no explanation at all, but we get the idea that Spock is using his telepathy to somehow project his mind back to his body. Maybe McCoy and Scotty are helping, closing the circle and concentrating or whatever. We never get any details, just an idea that they're trying something like that. It's very economical - the same kind of storytelling economy that is also shown by Shatner's use of stereotypes in his body language, and having Janice Lester by a psycho bad guy.

It's sad that this is the last episode, but I don't agree with others who think they went out on a low note. This is a great episode.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 11:48am



But how do you really feel about it Jim?

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 11:57am

Just relieved to get that off my chest, really.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:04pm

Um, not sure if this is the right place for you to display your unpublished sci-fi journal article...

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:06pm

Sweet Jesus, this is epic.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:11pm

imagine if they had done a Turnaround-type on Voyager? With Janeway grabbing her crotch, spitting and trying to hit on some female aliens?

[Reply](#)

- [Persia](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:11pm

If you have to work this hard to explain that something isn't really sexist, maybe there's something wrong with your central thesis. Just a thought.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:14pm

Well, everything from the 60s is sexist. But is it more sexist than its context, or is it trying to be progressive within the constraints of its time, or what?

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:24pm

It's pretty sexist, as was most of the series, but those were the times.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 12:25pm

For something to be a 'screed' it has to be intentional. I don't read Zach's take as it having been intentional, but the apogee of the sort of unintentional, sexist condescension that even well-meaning people accepted at the time.

That said, I also loved the ep as a kid (have yet to see it as an adult), and even found it to be intensely erotic (doubtless the idea of taking a vacation in a female body, which (not to confirm too many sexist stereotypes about young boys), I imagined would include showers with other girls and leisurely seances in front of a mirror examining myself. In fact, I am reasonably certain that I took this to be the most plausible way I would ever be able to examine a naked female.

I am glad to report, three decades later on, that I was mistaken in this regard (comment board breathes a collective sigh of relief).

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 1:05pm

Yes. It is good. All good.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 1:32pm

I applaud the thought and work that went into the thesis. I'm not sure I buy it.

I haven't seen the episode in many years, so I can't marshal a full counterargument. However, from the recap, doesn't the fact that Lester proves incompetent as a commander undercut your argument.

The alternative is not that she succeeds, murders Kirk, and the series goes out on a chilling note. The alternative could be that she's a great commander, maybe even better than Kirk, but that Spock et al. figure out that she's not Kirk in time to save Kirk-as-Janis, and the series goes out on the tragic note that her talents are squandered because she went criminally insane.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 3:05pm

That sort of is the note that the series goes out on, isn't it? The tragic note that Janice's talents are squandered because she went criminally insane.

I do agree that Lester's failure as a commander undercuts my argument a bit. But I'm not sure she really gets a fair chance. She doesn't get to match wits with a Romulan commander, or talk a rogue computer into suicide, or blow up a planet-killer. Maybe she would have been great at those things. Instead, right away she makes a couple crucial missteps, attempting to cover up her crime. After the flaps over the Benecia Colony and Dr Coleman, Spock's eyebrow is raised, and Lester has a serious problem. More serious than she realizes, which I guess is another failure, but Spock's eyebrow is very formidable. Anyway, once Spock mind-melds with Lester's former body, Captain Lester is facing a full-scale mutiny. Her chances to "succeed" as a commander are over.

What she needed to do was keep her head down for a few days, not do anything to draw attention. Just let the Enterprise proceed on business as usual. But she would have had to be a really, really cool cucumber to pull it off completely. Instead, she makes a couple blunders that are typical of criminals in a TV show like say Law & Order Criminal Intent, and those are enough to alert the good guys. You know who would have come thru in that situation? Capt Tracy, from The Omega Glory. That fucker would have become Admiral Kirk, Lord of Starfleet, while Kirk was left to rot in Janice's body in some backwater asylum somewhere. Other characters are sort of "lesser villains", and don't really have the same chops.

Zack's right in the review, Lester's basic mistake was failing to strangle Kirk right at the beginng of the episode. But man, it all happened very quickly. She had to brag to Kirk a little - I mean, she had to,

right? I would have had to. And she must have been a little disoriented in the new body. And maybe it's a little tougher than it looks, to strangle the body you've spent your whole life in. And Spock/McCoy/Coleman returned sooner than expected. Lester just needed another couple minutes. That doesn't make her Hamlet, with "dithering" her central character flaw. She had a narrow window to accomplish what she needed to, and didn't quite get it done. Once they went back on board, the rule of law took over and it was much harder to get Kirk killed.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 3:09pm

Actually, now that I think about it Lester would have turned out to be a terrible commander. We know that, right? She might have been tactically brilliant, and daring. But referencing my above monologue about how command is sort of a shared contract: Kirk always acted to protect his ship and crew, and brooded over dead crewmen. Whereas Lester's first acts, before this episode even opened, were to murder the members of her expedition, to lure the Enterprise into position. She was going to lose the trust of her officers and crew eventually. It just happened sooner, because Spock was there to challenge her.

Perhaps latent sociopathic tendencies were what got her booted off the command path at Starfleet.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 3:29pm

Damn, alurin and Zack have some good ideas. What if this had been a two-parter; and what if Lester had gotten a chance to show what she could do?

So the Enterprise leaves this planet with Lester in command, Kirk in Lester's body in isolation, Dr Coleman wandering around, and Spock's eyebrow raised. They go on to the next thing - and the next thing turns out to be a typical Star Trek adventure. Spock hasn't had a chance to do the mind-meld yet because the exigencies of the new adventure keep him busy on the bridge. At the end of part 1 the Enterprise faces a dangerous cliffhanger with Lester in command and Kirk locked up.

In part 2 Lester resolves the problem in some brilliant but crazy way, and in the process allows some crewmen to be killed in circumstances where Kirk would have moved heaven and earth to try to save them. Everyone but Lester is convinced there's a problem. (She thinks she's proven she belongs.) Spock finally gets a chance to mind-meld with Lester's body, and the rest of part 2 proceeds as the existing episode does.

Basically just interpolate a Star Trek adventure into the middle of this story. 2nd half of episode one is the first part of the new adventure, 1st half of episode two is the conclusion of the new adventure, and the existing story frames it.

The episode as aired is very good; but THAT would have been AWESOME.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 4:36pm

Open to interpretation. At the beginning of the episode she rails about how "It isn't fair!" And after a pause Kirk says, "No it isn't."

Is it a real thing and Kirk agrees it's unfair? Is he just agreeing with the sick woman to be comforting? Is he being ironic: thinking about his past relationship with the crazy chick and listening to her bitch, and thinking yeah, it's unfair? Either that he has to listen to her bitch, or that she turned out to be crazy, or some other unknown thing?

We don't have much to go on. Least hypothesis is that Kirk agrees with her that "it" isn't fair. Or you could read more into it.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 7:41pm

I hope this doesn't start a trend of epic strung-together posts, but that was awesome, Jim. What about the music?

As to any accusations of sexism, it's a show where all of the professional women wear miniskirts, which is also awesome.

And I was thinking the same thing about sane leadership - nearly all of the Starfleet Captains we meet are crazier than a shithouse rat. Kirk included.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)JimZipCode  
3/05/10 10:49pm

I had to skim Jim's dissertation in defense of Intruder, but I wanted to drop in a belated Kirk quote from Elaan of Troyius, which I happened to rewatch earlier tonight:

"Mr. Spock, the women on your planet are logical. That's the only planet in this galaxy that can make that claim."

So let's not get too carried away with giving Trek credit for feminism. It's like making the claim that Jim Crow is better than slavery: while true in a technical, for-the-sake-of-argument sense, you're tilting at windmills if you to present it as evidence of equality.

[2](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 1:09am

Yes. Star Trek is a flawed vessel for feminism. A distorted prism.

Still it was one of the very few popular entertainments to grapple with the topic at the time.

Seeing it in 70s syndication as a kid, I knew that people had traversed this territory before and there was no excuse for not being further ahead than Kirk.

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 2:46am

Whiels till not convince byt his argument, I can see the idea that the people who making this episode may have THOUGHT it was feminist:

Pointing out the problems the poor girls have to go thru, and it's enough to make a person crazy, innit?

[1](#)  
[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 4:23am

Math is hard.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 5:39am

For those fascinated by such things, TOS DID sort-of give us the first female captain, who appeared in Star Trek IV: The Voyager Home. She is captaining one of the ships which is disabled by the Probe passing by on its way to Earth.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 11:06am

I agree 100% with Jim here and I thank him for articulating these points so well. We shouldn't bring our own liberal guilt to this episode. It's really one of the best, on so many levels. To me, the series went out on a great note with these two. All Our Yesterdays is one of my longtime favorites and I think both of these are top 10.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)JimZipCode  
3/06/10 11:44am

Jim, I believe sci-fi is mostly about looking at multi-sided things through more than one lens. I applaud you.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:21am

This review

Seemed a little.. looser than the previous ones? Romulian Ale perhaps?

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 11:52am

It's like when you get to the last stretch of a marathon. You can see the end in sight, but it feels like it's the longest distance you've had to run so far. So you're gassed. Also that last episode was crap.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Persia](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 12:10pm

Talk about going out with a whimper, yeah.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 12:27pm

Yeah, this isn't one of my better pieces. Chalk it up to exhaustion, and having almost nothing left to say about this show that I haven't said have a dozen times already.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 12:44pm

Well, luckily TNG is nothing like TOS, so I'm sure you'll have plenty of new insights to bring to bear.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [SnaitN](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 12:51pm

Well, at least from that episode where they blow up the guy's head at Starfleet Command... TNG is sorta sucktastic before that episode brings out the ownage.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 12:52pm

How much is there really to say about Turnabout Intruder?

I was kind of expecting an F though. It's definitely my least favourite original episode, and only barely above the worst of all Star Trek episodes (TNG's Shades of Gray).

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 1:12pm

Shades of Gray sure makes a case, but I'm gonna go with Precious Cargo from Enterprise.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 1:45pm

No, no. "The Fight" from Voyager is the worst. The tortured boxing metaphors, the aliens who use the Holodeck to communicate, that bizarre clip show at the end that aped all the Prophet visions from DS9—that's the ass end of Star Trek there.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 1:51pm

I'm pretty sure we'll see the ass-end of Star Trek next week.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 1:54pm

No, no, no. The worst possible episode was the Voyager that starred Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson as Space Rock.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 2:12pm

I LOLed hard at Space Rock giving the People's Eyebrow, which is unusual for any Trek series that isn't DS9.

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 3:58pm

Which one is the Voyager ep where Janeway and Paris turn into space salamanders and they have little salamander babies?

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [AlwaysBeenTim](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 4:49pm

My vote for the worst is Threshold, the Voyager episode where they try to break the Warp 10 barrier, Paris and Janeway devolve into amphibians, screw, have baby things and are returned back to human form. Biggest WTF moment ever

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 4:50pm

@simonillyan: Threshold. Good point, I'd put that one out of my mind completely.

What I liked about that episode was that it established that Transwarp was essentially deadly and dangerous, and despite this Voyager spent entire seasons trying to get access to Transwarp from the Borg.

But I will offer some defense of the episode with The Rock. That scene was a jump the shark moment, to be sure, but I seem to recall most of the episode revolving around J.G. Hertzler mentoring Jeri Ryan to learn to fight, and I recall that stuff being solid. Plus, wasn't Jeffrey Combs in that one, too? That scene might have brought the episode down to a D, but not quite an F, in my opinion.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 6:19pm

It was a sweeps episode. Hertzler and Combs were in it to get the DS9 fans to watch, The Rock was in it to attract the hooboons. It sucked but no more than your average Voyager episode.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/05/10 7:01pm

The Rock ep was no more a Jump the Shark moment than the Joe Piscopo episode of TNG. Both were mere speed bumps. If Voyager has a jump the shark moment, it was the very first episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/06/10 2:35am

'hooboons'.. i'll have to write that one down, my English is getting rusty...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/06/10 5:08am

Threshold always gets the rap as being the worst episode of Trek, but it's not even the worst episode of Voyager or even the worst episode in that season (which is probably "Partuition"). It's bad but it's bashit-insane bad, helped out by a few decent enough scenes (Tom's transformation is idiotic but actually quite well-realised, especially when his tongue falls out in sickbay), but Tom mooning over Kes while Neelix gets jealous REALLY provides Voyager's lowest moments. Thankfully it passes fairly quickly. What was that Enterprise episode, "A Night In Sick Bay" I think it was called? Nothing happens for forty-five minutes. Worst. Trek. Ever.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Vulcan With a Mullet](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

3/06/10 7:05pm

Ironically, "Turnabout Intruder" is also the name of my particular favorite Vulcan sex act. Totally worth waiting seven years for.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen

3/05/10 12:12pm

Excellent Yesterdays

Zach:

Great analysis on how Yesterdays could have been improved, all the while giving it its due: I'd struggled with the question myself and you put your finger right on it. The beginning should set up the essential of what is to follow, and the end should wrap it up. The best being Spock and his struggle, the rest should set that up rather than filling in random dots. Good call.

Anyways, just in general, kudos on a job well done with these TOS write-ups. I wasn't always in complete agreement, but I was, without exception, amused and sometimes enlightened. It's been great going through them with you and I look forward to TNG. If anyone can make the first two seasons worth slogging through again (though Wil Wheaton was giving it a good go), it's you....

From time to time, my fellow commenters have made reference to other sites (the one with 'Joanna', sorry forget the name, was a real gem for fans), including The Agony Booth. I went and took a look and ended up spending some amusing hours there. Not to knock them, but TAB is good example of what I am so glad you have managed to avoid in these writeups. You don't hesitate to criticize and are not above the occasional snark (I particularly appreciated the fact that the elves aren't returning your calls either. I am not alone), but you don't see these things as nothing but opportunity-ies to let loose on sitting space ducks. Even ex-youngster Wheaton leans a bit hard on the quip button for my taste.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr

3/05/10 12:15pm

Yes, three cheers for Zack!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr

3/05/10 12:15pm

Hip!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr

3/05/10 12:16pm

Hip!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Richelieu Jr

3/05/10 12:16pm

Hooray!



[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [tragically ludicrous not ludic](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 12:52pm

I concur! Good job, Zack. Can't wait for Next Generation, I've been watching it in re-runs every night and reliving my childhood.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 1:04pm

Indeed. Good work Zack. These Star Trek write-ups have become one of the highlights of my week (how sad is that?).

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 1:09pm

Two and a half cheers.

Hip hip, hooray!

Hip hip, hooray!

Hip hip, hoo!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 1:35pm

Second the motion, Zack. A consistently entertaining and insightful series of reviews, which helped me to look at TOS with fresh eyes.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 3:09pm

Concur completely; a great series of reviews that goes out on a bit of a down note, just like the TV series.

That said, you may want to rethink your plan to suffer through the Trek spinoffs. I wouldn't wish that on anyone.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 3:24pm

I give you an A, Zack Handlen!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Backseat Boyfight](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 3:35pm

These reviews have been a great addition to the AV Club. Thanks so much for writing them. I love that TOS is being introduced to people who may not have given it a chance otherwise. Very much looking forward to the TNG write ups! :)

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 4:05pm

Huzzah!

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 6:01pm

I extend to you a laurel, and hearty handshake.

Seriously, I'll miss this. I didn't really watch NextGen, so if you do that, I'll be lost. But at least I know the movies...

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 6:58pm

You'll be fine, Sugartits. I've never really watched The Original Series before Handlen started reviewing the episodes. The reviews were a great gateway.

And fortunately, The Next Generation was more the show that I watched when I was a young un', so I'm prepared for some good times and nostalgia.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 8:00pm

Great job, Zack. Thanks. Good post-game discussions too. This has been a lot of fun.

Oh, and I never pass up an opportunity to recommend at least checking out "Route 66". It's 1960s TV gold.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 11:04pm

Any room left in the Zach Admiration Squad?

Well done on all of these recaps, sir, and thanks for talking your bosses into paying you to watch Trek. You have the job many of us always wanted, and you never let it go to your head — a remarkable achievement on both counts!

Looking forward to the V/VI write-ups next week, and moving on into the Next Generation. See you there!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/06/10 2:16am

My compliments as well.

As Picard once justifiably said to Data: "...Nicely done!"

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/06/10 3:34pm

My quibbles with the grades aside (okay, one last time: what crazy world is it in which "And the Children Shall Lead" gets the same grade as "Where No Man Has Gone Before" and "The Menagerie"?), I've really enjoyed these reviews. It was fun seeing Star Trek as a tv show rather than as Star Trek, if you get what I mean.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 12:11pm

I guess we'll have to wait for Generations

Which I recently rewatched, and I discovered it wasn't as bad as I remembered. It's definitely one of the best-directed ST movies—the light-drenched scenes on the Enterprise when they get to Soran's observatory are way more visually interesting than anything the show ever did, and I thought all the emotionally pivotal scenes (Picard and Troi in his quarters, Picard and Data, Picard and Soran in Ten Forward and on the planet) were actually handled extremely well for the movie.

It's the writing that makes this a little problematic. If Picard is so worried about his family line dying out, why not seek alternatives to keep it going? It's the 24th century, after all. And why doesn't Picard just send himself back to Ten Forward to arrest Soran there? And destroying the Enterprise just seemed wrong to me—it was another character on the show, and it was killed off to make way for a newer and more attractive model, on top of which the way it was done seemed very highly implausible. And what, did they give Geordi five hours of downtime to recover from torture? Eh. I don't think this stuff sinks the movie, but they could have done a better job here.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 12:14pm

I really thought that, since they blew up Enterprise #1 in ST III, that particular plot point shouldn't ever come up again.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 12:27pm

Generations is all over the place- has a lot to recommend, has a lot to facepalm over.

You're right about the lighting. That's something that, for whatever reason, has stuck with me about that movie. I actually liked the destruction of the Enterprise-D for the same reasons- the ship was always sterile and quiet on the show; Generations gave it some life.

Of course, they also have the baddie somehow destroying a star by shooting a rocket at it. So there's that.

[2](#)

[Reply](#)

- [tragically ludicrous not ludic](#)Eponymous

3/05/10 12:51pm

I remember enjoying Generations a lot at the time, but I was ten. Haven't watched it since. I prefer to remember it well.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 1:16pm

Say whatever else you want about Generations, because it has some big problems, but Patrick Stewart rocks the shit out of that movie.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 1:41pm

@Bad Horse: Stewart and Malcolm McDowell are both awesome in that movie. They didn't screw up that pairing at all. All the comic business, though...

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 3:40pm

I still enjoy Generations, but it's main problem is it is trying to be a feature-length TNG episode rather than a movie. Had it been put out as a TV movie (like Voyager did a few times with the Borg and The Year of Hell) it might hold up a bit better.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 3:41pm

Not to mention that a transitional film between the two generations was totally unnecessary after the way Undiscovered Country ended. TNG needed to get off to a start by themselves; they did not need any hand-holding.

Joebags, I love your idea for a better Kirk death. Such a shame how they finished off such a great character, when so many fans of Trek could come up with better death scenes, such as yours.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 3:42pm

I do like the "life forms song", though.

[Reply](#)

- [mmy](#)Eponymous  
3/05/10 7:36pm

If you listen to the DVD commentary by the film's writers, it's pretty clear they had a shit-load of studio instructions that they had to obey, and time was a factor. The movie doesn't make any logical sense, and they know it, but they had little choice.

Having said that, I love the acting in it. I thought I had seen Patrick Stewart do everything he could with that character, but when he cries and then tries to force the emotion down, that surprised me.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Eponymous

3/06/10 2:53am

Anyone besides me seen the 'sans Shatner' cut?

BTW, I like the way he goes out: Gracefully, accepting that time has passed him by without anyone having to rop the steering wheel from his cold, dead hands...

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Eponymous

3/07/10 10:04pm

@DN Nation: A rocket that seems to take 10 seconds to reach the star. Earth to the sun at light speed is 8 minutes. That rocket was capable of warp 1 or higher?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [The Pizza Monster](#)Zack Handlen

3/05/10 11:22am

The Final Commentier

Hey Zack thanks for the awesome write-ups for the last year +. My favorite Friday column, I had a lot of laughs here.

OK so how hot was Mariette Hartley in "All Our Yesterdays"? She rocked that cavegirl outfit like Wilma Flinstone. Other than that, of all the places in time to be sent back to, I would've liked Kirk anywhere else but puritanical witchhunt era. If they were gonna go with 3 Musketeers theme because of the budget, then I'd rather see Kirk in action, doing some serious space swashbuckling, than sitting in a courtroom/jail cell.

Turnabout Intruder: what a weird, ridiculous, AWESOME way to end the season. The Shatning was off the richter scale here.

Thanks again Zach you rock.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster

3/05/10 11:31am

I've had ST on VHS copy-from-tv since I was a kid, and then I got it on DVD, then one season on HD (damnit) and more recently I broke down for the BD.

Since I got them in order, I don't think I ever made it through the end of the third season and as such, it was a surprise to me to learn that these two episodes rounded the series out. All Our Yesterdays was a pretty good ep, to my way of thinking, and I'm always amused by the librarian. For some reason, I always thought of Turnabout as being a first season ep (but I'm probably confusing that with Clone Kirk in What are Little Girls Made Of.

Anyway, what a terrible way to end. Zack (and it is Zack, not Zach, let's try to get it right for TNG, people) is correct that Lester is such a terrible shrew, you'd think this was 1960's era Broadway or something.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)The Pizza Monster

3/05/10 11:44am

I got Zack spelled right in my first line and wrong at the end, sorry bro

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)The Pizza Monster

3/05/10 11:56am

I find All Our Yesterdays to be pretty worthless. That should be a C-minus episode. It has two good things going for it: Mariete Hartley in a fur bikini, and the late Ian Wolfe as crazy weird little Mr. Atoz.

Ian Wolfe was born in \*1896\* ! How cool is it to be born in 1896 and appear in a Star Trek episode? (A time travel one, at that.) People might remember Ian Wolfe from Creator, as Peter O'Toole's friend Professor Brauer from the Institute for Advanced Research. And also as the butler Hirsch from WKRP in Cincinnati.

I do love Mariette Hartley. But the story is trash. It's not even a story, really. The justification for Spock going crazy is nonexistent.

I do agree that Spock's final line is great. But it sucks too, because what it calls to mind most is Kirk's final line in another time travel story with a dead love interest: and City on the Edge of Forever is 80 million times the story that All Our Yesterdays is.

Forgettable.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)The Pizza Monster  
3/05/10 12:05pm

Oh, snap! I forgot that was Hirsch.

In my mind, I always conflate that guy with Hume Cronyn.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
3/05/10 12:32pm

I'm thinking I get it wrong pretty much all of the time. Sorry Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)The Pizza Monster  
3/05/10 12:32pm

I'm thinking I get it wrong pretty much all of the time. Sorry Zack.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)The Pizza Monster  
3/05/10 1:21pm

@JimZipCode: The justification isn't nonexistent, it's merely nonsensical.

[Reply](#)

- [Ajax](#)The Pizza Monster  
3/05/10 10:36pm

I'm going to officially disagree with an expressed consensus here (namely "the only good Star Trek novel Pocket Books ever put out was 'The Final Reflection'") and say that A.C. Crispin wrote a couple of pretty good follow-up stories to "All Our Yesterdays", entitled "Yesterday's Son" and "Time For Yesterday."

Both center on the conceit that Spock's, shall we say, "dalliance" with the lovely Zarabeth produced a son, Zar, who gets a lot of mileage out of his quarter-Vulcan heritage.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)The Pizza Monster

3/06/10 5:13am

Best way to think of the end of S3 Trek is to just assume it ends with All Our Yesterdays and that Turnabout Intruder was just some SNL sketch or something that we all collectively forget was a skit rather than the real thing. Yesterday DOES have a lot of memorable scenes, even though most of it is recycled from plots we've seen earlier (time travel, crew separated, Spock Has Feelings, planet in danger to provide some sense of tension etc etc) and Nimoy really is terrific in it. Kirk's plot is pretty forgettable, but oh well, he Shats it up a bit and it fills a few moments, so that's good enough. A much better and more satisfying ending to the season!

And as always, thanks Zack for some completely awesome write-ups. Can't wait for TNG to roll on!

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)The Pizza Monster

3/07/10 1:33am

@Ajax — That sounds pretty interesting. Thanks for the recommendation.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Optramark](#)Zack Handlen

3/05/10 11:24am

So...

CBS.comAMC.comIs TNG available for free viewing online anywhere? I ask because I'm cheap, you see, and TOS on (and for that matter, Prisoner on ) were some kind of awesome. Just curious—trying to stay ahead.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Optramark

3/05/10 11:32am

I applaud your thrift, but \$320 for 7 seasons isn't a bad deal:

<http://www.amazon.com/Star-...>

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Optramark

3/05/10 11:53am

Maybe for you, John! But I could be using that fat loot for a new XBox 360.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Optramark

3/05/10 11:59am

Not a bad deal, but still pretty damned expensive. I looked to see if Amazon was still selling it (which they aren't) but they used to offer every season of Star Trek (TOS through Enterprise) and all the movies (before JJ Abrahms) for like \$1000. I doubt anyone bought it, but still, if I had won the lotto I could see myself buying that package deal.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Optramark

3/05/10 12:01pm

There are 178 episodes of TNG (or a couple more, depending on how you handle two parters). That works out to about \$1.80 per episode. So, objectively, I think its a pretty good deal.

I do really like Forsa Motorsport 3, however, so I appreciate your dilemma.

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Optramark  
3/05/10 12:29pm

I got mine for 125 euros!

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Optramark  
3/05/10 12:29pm

I got mine for 125 euros!

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Optramark  
3/05/10 1:43pm

I'm not sure it's the greatest deal, considering a good portion of those episodes are going to be Crusher/Riker/Wesley/Troi episodes. Probably better to just buy individual episodes from the internet, if you can.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)Optramark  
3/05/10 3:54pm

It ain't free, but if you just want to watch them, as opposed to keep them, Netflix seems to be the way to go here.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Optramark  
3/06/10 5:25am

I have TOS in the remastered DVDs and they do look amazing, but there's no way I'm splashing out for TNG, DS9, Voyager and Enterprise as well, deeply though I do love Trek. If you ever wondered who those "Fan Collective" DVDs are aimed at, it's me, because it means I can have a few really outstanding episodes in high quality picture and sound, and the rest I can get from what I shall euphemistically refer to as "other sources"

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Optramark  
3/06/10 2:52pm

"I got mine for 125 euros! "

I got mine for 20 quatloos.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:06am

This is the beginning of the end.  
He who was first shall be last, and he who was last shall be first.

[Reply](#)

- [The Pizza Monster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:13am

Nice one John,

[Reply](#)



- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:14am

Failed firsties, failed lasties.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:22am

John B. has the minor distinction of having the first post on the first episode of classic Star Trek. With this in mind, I've been plotting this move for weeks, and now my crazy schemes have come to fruition and my name will forever be sung in Epic Poems of the Internet.

Pile it on, boys- this has made my week.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:31am

If it makes you happy "May you be raped by thousands of Chekov clones full of Fiery Canceraids"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:34am

It doesn't make me "unhappy", per se.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:50am

Great firstie. It works on so many levels. The Leonard Nimoy of firsties, if you will.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 11:54am

Good for you, ol' chap!

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 12:30pm

but... shouldn't you want the LAST post on this thread, not the first?

[Reply](#)

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 12:39pm

I humbly retract my "failed" comment. I had the display set to "newest first" and I see now that you are, in fact, the man. Golf claps for everyone.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 12:43pm

Alurin-

Stay tuned.

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/05/10 1:00pm

You haven't gone last yet. From Hell's heart I stab at thee.

[Reply](#)

- [blasmo](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/05/10 1:38pm

Nicely done.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

3/05/10 12:00pm

Beech

When I was younger, I tried to give Star Trek V the benefit of the doubt, but I just can't anymore. I only own it on VHS, and that was just so I could make sure I would have the picture of the Enterprise on the side cover completed (which if anyone remembers those VHS versions, awesome).

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut

3/05/10 12:13pm

Every once in a while I'll pop it in, hoping it aged better than I remember.

Short answer: no.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut

3/05/10 1:28pm

Time is generally unkind to major movies that look worse than concurrently-filmed TV series. Compare 3rd season TNG effects and sets to STV and TNG wins (when they aren't the same sets, which is less often than it should be).

[Reply](#)

- [simonillyan](#)Right Wingnut

3/05/10 4:03pm

Frighteningly enough, Star Trek V was the first of the movies that I ever watched. (It was the only one available at the library.)

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut

3/05/10 5:29pm

I borrowed it from my brother on Blu-ray(who's a Star Trek completist and claimed that it's "not really that bad"), and it actually does get worse when you watch it on blu-ray (in addition to simply getting worse with the natural progression of time, like the aged Durian fruit from this week's AV taste test). Particularly the blue screens when Kirk is falling off of El Capitan

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Right Wingnut

3/06/10 2:49am

I watched it again for the second time in a year, and it was less terrible than I'd remembered.. Some scenes take on an almost Beckett/Pinter-esque surrealism:

'You would kill me, a man you do not know, for field of empty holes?'  
'It is all I have!'

[Reply](#)

- [CFAmick](#)Right Wingnut  
3/07/10 10:00pm

The fact that the beginning and ending scenes of ST:V take place in Yosemite gives me hope for the future, that maybe, we don't screw things up too badly.

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)Right Wingnut  
3/08/10 6:51pm

It's the only ST movie that I still haven't seen. Should I continue to pretend it never happened?

I don't remember how many episodes of "Enterprise" that I watched, but it was fewer than 5. Did it really last 4 seasons? Damn. I see it put down a lot, but I have also read here about many references made to races & planets & plot points from each of the other series. Are any individual episodes worth hunting down, for their cleverness and / or humor?

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
3/09/10 12:56pm

Enterprise's consensus best episode is the "In A Mirror Darkly" two-parter, probably the only episode of that series to live up to its premise.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Bad Horse](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:20am

The crazy scale

"The characters have seen enough complete insanity on their five year mission that a body-swap barely registers above hiccups on the crazy scale,"

And yet this trope will be beaten to death on the other series, and nobody ever seems to figure it out within 5 seconds of it happening. Shit, it happens every other week on Voyager, and they never get wise? It always takes them 3 commercial breaks to understand there's a body-snatching alien, thus putting the actual audience through 30 excruciatingly boring minutes where they are a light-year ahead of the actual characters - you know, the very best of the highly evolved, impossibly capable humanity of the future.

I mean, the second (horrible) episode of TNG had genre savvy used as a plot device to overcome the obstacle. After that, the "experience" method goes out of favor. Shit, if humans can't learn from experience, what are they doing exploring the cosmos in the first place?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
3/05/10 12:33pm

On the other hand, being ahead of the characters i called 'dramatic irony' and is one of the best, most sophisticated dramatic devices. of course, it's not excuse for using the same trope again and again...

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
3/05/10 12:33pm

On the other hand, being ahead of the characters i called 'dramatic irony' and is one of the best, most sophisticated dramatic devices. of course, it's not excuse for using the same trope again and again...

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)Bad Horse  
3/05/10 1:01pm

Ah see whut ya did theyer.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Bad Horse  
3/05/10 1:03pm

I guess I don't think I should ever be ahead of a 24th-century space explorer with an IQ of 300.

[Reply](#)

- [Dired](#)Bad Horse  
3/05/10 4:19pm

When dramatic irony is handled well, it can be very effective. But it usually just makes everyone else seem like uncharacteristic blinded idiots. And in a series, when we've seen the characters interact for years and all of a sudden one of them is obviously seriously affected but no one notices, it just doesn't work. And since it usually makes people who have been established as smart act like fools, it counts as character sabotage, which is always terrible.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Bad Horse  
3/06/10 2:30am

Yup, you gotta be true tot he characters? nobaody likes thier heros to seem foolish...

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Bad Horse  
3/06/10 5:01am

Actually that body-swapping Voyager episode isn't bad, or at the very least is GREATLY helped by Bulldog Off Of Frasier turning in a performance that's way, way better than the script deserves. It also shows which members of the actual crew could act and which could just about manage their own characters at a stretch (hint: Paris, not great, Chakotay, terrible, Janeway, remarkably good).

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [urgh](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:07am

Star Trek V Rules!

Bring on fan-dancing Uhura!

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)urgh  
3/05/10 11:54am

Great, just in time for Barfman to leave!

(Of course, if it was young Uhura dancing, then we'd be OK)

[Reply](#)

- [tragically ludicrous not ludic](#)urgh  
3/05/10 12:48pm

I'll distract them with my feminine wiles!

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymousurgh](#)  
3/05/10 5:10pm

<http://culturedetritus.blog...> The best thing you can say about Star Trek V is that it's not the worst Star Trek. I scientifically proved that here:

[Reply](#)

- [beetlejesusurgh](#)  
3/05/10 5:26pm

what? give birth?

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Holeurgh](#)  
3/06/10 4:57am

I respectfully disagree. Insurrection is dull in the extreme, but it's just a typical late-period TNG two-parter but made on film rather than during the series. It's the same as something like Time's Arrow - competent but utterly average in every way, a meh made real. You could get away with that during the run of a TV show, because there was always a chance of something better next week but that's not a strategy that works when you're trying to get bums on seats. Star Trek V has (apparently) a few memorable moments, but it's bad moments are far, far worse than anything in Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

- [postdlfurgh](#)  
3/06/10 10:29am

I think point #11 in the culturedetritus posting is the strongest one—why was a movie wasted on such a lame premise and completely lame and uninteresting new characters and aliens, when they had a three decade multimedia franchise to exploit? It's like Nuclear Man in Superman IV. If only there were some source of ready-made and time-tested villains that people already recognized and liked, from 50 years of comics, for example. There were many things they could have dusted off that would have been far more entertaining to retread than the stuff they went out of their way to make up. No, kids will love F. Murray Abraham doing high camp like he's Mommy Dearest in space.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkeyurgh](#)  
3/06/10 11:13am

Sorry, but I cannot stand behind "just recycle something old! JEEEEZ!"  
I prefer fresh failure over that.

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirkurgh](#)  
3/09/10 10:47am

Time's Arrow was ten times better than Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [thats Mr Fhtagn to you](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:20am

"vaguely Asian actors"

Introduced the Karate Kid films to the Fhtagn kids over the weekend. I never noticed before that every Japanese-American actor in LA appears in Karate Kid Part 2, set in "Okinawa".

Fat bespectacled auto exec from "Gung Ho"  
B.D. Wong  
and a couple of others who I can't place offhand.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/05/10 12:17pm

You know who's vaguely Asian:

Mickey Rooney.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/05/10 3:47pm

Oh, Miss Gorightry!

Christ, how I hate that movie.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/05/10 4:20pm

Don't forget Marlon Brando!

[http://www.youtube.com/watch...](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Reply](#)

- [What Are You Looking At Sugart](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/05/10 5:55pm

No yankee my wankee - the Donger need food.

[Reply](#)

- [KODIAK JERRYZUCKER](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/05/10 6:58pm

Don't forget Ghenghis Wayne,  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch...](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/06/10 4:15am

B. D. Wong is Japanese-American? Somebody should let him know.

[Reply](#)

- [postdlf](#)thats Mr Fhtagn to you  
3/06/10 10:33am

Sean Connery can be vaguely Asian.

[http://andrewsidea.files.wo...](http://andrewsidea.files.wordpress.com/...)

Come to think of it, he looks more like a Vulcan.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [i hate to be that guy](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 3:18pm

pliocene exile

The punishment of Mariette Hartley's character in All Our Yesterdays reminds me of Julian May's Pliocene Exile books. I haven't read those since the 80s but thoroughly loved them as a teen. Anyone read them recently? Do they hold up?

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)i hate to be that guy  
3/05/10 3:22pm

Though now that I think about it, Robert Silverberg used the same sort of idea in Hawksbill Station, and he did it before Star Trek. First as a short story a couple years earlier than All Our Yesterdays, then turning it into a novel the next year.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)i hate to be that guy  
3/06/10 2:14am

"Hawksbill Station" was originally a novella (not a short story) and was superior to the later novel. This sort of thing has happened more often than I would like; readers learn of the novel but may never have heard of the more memorable novella. (Other examples are Daniel Keyes' "Flowers for Algernon" and Larry Niven's "Rammer," which became the first section of the novel A World Out of Time.)

On the other hand, I find John Varley's short story "Air Raid" and novel Millennium (which evolved from his screenplay based on "Air Raid") to be equally enjoyable. And then there's the case of James Schmitz's The Witches of Karres; the 1949 novella (with slight alterations at the end) became the first section of the 1966 novel, with excellent results possibly because of the 17-year interim.

[Reply](#)

- [alurini](#)i hate to be that guy  
3/09/10 5:07pm

I enjoyed the Pliocene Exile books in the 80s too. Haven't tried to re-read them, but they're still on my shelves, waiting...

[Reply](#)

- [barefoot jim](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 12:11pm

Mariette Hartley

Easily one of the most beautiful women to grace any episode of Trek. And according to IMDB, working right up to this day.

Oh, back in the day, she could totally shake it like a Polaroid picture.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)barefoot jim  
3/05/10 1:01pm

I still keep thinking she's married to Jim Rockford though.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)barefoot jim  
3/05/10 1:07pm

Lots of hotties in TOS. I think Mariette isn't necessarily more beautiful than most of the others. Rather she's distinguished by the sweet soft voice and being so interesting & engaging. Some of the other hot chicks on Star Trek were kind of twerps - the girls from Wink of an Eye or Mark of Gideon, for

example, or Droxine from Cloud Minders. With Mariette, you think of being trapped in that ice cave for the rest of your life with her, and you're like "Awesome!"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)barefoot jim  
3/05/10 2:44pm

Anybody else now have the Rockford Files theme playing in their head? That shit's relentless.

[Reply](#)

- [tibber](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 5:12pm

just putting it out there again:

Mariette Hartley=hottest Trek chick ever.

[Reply](#)

- [i hate to be that guy](#)tibber  
3/05/10 6:13pm

If she's not, she's definitely in the top five.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)tibber  
3/06/10 11:44am

I have to agree, Hill's right up there. I also liked the girl from S1 who had the evil Lurch robot. She was a good'n. Also a fan of the Romulan and the Mirror Universe girl. And And re: S1, I had no problem at all accepting Ensign Rand's hotness as a motivation. She was the only TOS girl with girl next door appeal. Hill and Hartley stand out, as did Sally Kellerman and Teri Garr. The rest are like that sorta weird but sorta hot girl from that one class you took. If there really was a sleep w/ Gene requirement, I would imagine that limited the pool somewhat.

And I am shocked, shocked! that we're having this conversation in the Turnabout Intruder article. It's only fitting.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)tibber  
3/06/10 11:46am

That "And And" was a typo, it was not meant to indicate present excitement.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 2:00pm

Alternate Universe

I'd like to think that TOS wasn't ever cancelled, instead, Gene Roddenberry was sitting on one of those director's chairs wearing his IDIC medallion over an open chested 1969-era shirt with muttonchop sideburns and watching Turnabout Intruder being filmed and he picks up a bullhorn and says:

"That's it, Shut It Down!"

And then the lights go out on stage.

The End.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 2:13pm



Too early for that lastie, John.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/05/10 2:35pm

I wonder if there's any evidence to suggest one of them hidden plotline thingies (like Chewie & R2 are rebel spies, or James Bond = code name of a position, or Feris Bueller doesn't really exist), and that the Kirk we see after the series ends (i.e. movie Kirk) is actually Janice Lester in Kirk's body?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 12:35pm

DOUBLE POSTS

Hey, no idea why every one of my posts i doubled. Is this showing up the same way for everyone?

From my POV, it seems to only be happening to me...

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/05/10 1:03pm

I see a couple of double posts from you, and none from anyone else (unless you count john barleycorn's presumably deliberate repeats).

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)Richelieu Jr  
3/06/10 2:56am

Well, my finger doesn't seem to be twitching, so I'm at a loss.. Happily, it seems to have stopped..  
Thanks for the news, haysoos.

[Reply](#)

- [Jack Strawb](#)Zack Handlen  
6/19/14 9:14pm

Zack self-indulges in the usual (and lazy) misreading of Turnabout Intruder. The first we hear it said, by Lester, that a woman may not command a starship, Kirk agrees it's unfair. At the close Kirk's "if only..." is easy to read as, "if only she'd been able to accept an unfair situation without it letting it drive her to mass murder." Noting that this particular character hated being the gender she was is not some grand indictment of hysterical women, it's a close look at that one person in particular. It can more readily, in fact, be read as an indictment of the limitations imposed on women and that those limitations can indeed drive someone insane.

*But she sows the seeds of her own defeat early on, when she's unable to kill the now unconscious and helplessly female Kirk. Not only is Janice a monomaniacal psychopath, she's incompetent to boot;*

More blatant misreading merely to support a far-fetched claim; in fact, Coleman tells us explicitly why Lester can't kill the momentarily helpless Kirk. She still loves him. It's easy when you watch the episodes.

*Because of course, deep down, she's still totally into him. It's always nice when what should be a sign of humanity and warmth instead looks like childish weakness.*

Contradicting yourself in adjacent sentences. So which is it? Incompetence, or the stuff of tragedy, where the agonist is ultimately destroyed due to something inherent in their character or as the result of an action driven by genuine desire?

*This another blatantly implausible development. Would McCoy ever tolerate being pushed aside like this? And not just pushed aside—Janice-in-Kirk flat out forbids McCoy from seeing Kirk-in-Jance at all. This is an order that only makes sense if you're trying to hide something.*

McCoy in fact strongly resists being 'pushed aside', and short of mutiny on the spot he resists as strongly as is possible. He's clearly extremely unhappy, to the point of initially ordering Chapel not to follow Kirk's order. I'd agree that Kirk forbidding conversation with Lester is mightily suspicious looking, but what else is he going to do at that point? If he can't keep her quiet, she stands a good chance of persuading the senior staff that she in fact is Kirk.

There are a lot of problems with this episode, but you haven't hit on any of the real ones. Once Lester takes over Kirk's body he could have ordered Lester be kept on the planet. Instead, a weak script gives Kirk a random about face in order to get the episode moving on board Enterprise. A solid final drafting would have included something such as a radiation leak that makes staying on the planet impossible. There are a good half dozen holes like this one, and worse. It's too bad. Turnabout is one draft away from being in the third quintile of Star Trek TOS episodes.

There's also one more horse beaten to death, drawn, quartered, and kicked some more, Christ, Zack. we get it. It's silly to keep noting as though it was a debit that episode a is one part b, one part c, one part d.... "There is nothing new under the sun" is as old as Ecclesiastes, FFS. Even the most seemingly avant-garde work can be read as combinations. If you so read as though that alone is a drawback, you say everything about your limitations, and nothing about the work.

[Reply](#)

- [breadalbane](#)Jack Strawb  
7/22/16 2:06am

And as The Original Series ended with a crappy, unwatchable episode, so does this comment section fittingly end with a crappy, unreadable post.

(No, no, not \*this\* post — the one just above. \*This\* post is like the closing theme song or something.)

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 3:26pm

Heh, Silence of the Lambs  
I see what you did there.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)El Santo  
3/05/10 3:27pm

Also, Kirk in a lady's body makes me think he'd into all sorts of Zapp Brannigan levels of inappropriateness.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)El Santo  
3/05/10 3:44pm

I find the most erotic part of me to be the boobies.

[1](#)

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:06am

Season 3

Honestly, I don't get all the hate. If you really look at it, Season 3 of Star Trek is easily the show's best season.

...OF GOOD EATS.

dun dun-dun dun-dun dun-dun DUN-DUN-DUN

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)D.N. Nation  
3/05/10 3:20pm

Hey, that's unfair. Alton Brown works very hard to make that show entertaining despite a shoe-string budget.

[Reply](#)

- [magnus](#)Zack Handlen  
3/06/10 2:55pm

"a hole in my chest where my heart used to be"

You're lucky. At least they didn't take your brain, leaving your body to be operated by Gigantor's control box. Cause that would suck.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)magnus  
3/06/10 11:28pm

I have fooled them all by not having a brain to take.

[Reply](#)

- [Strange\\_Bundle](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 12:24pm

TGTrek

Maybe this is the last episode because Kirk realizes when he's in a woman's body that he's not having any crazy urges, and then realizes that his rambling days have been wasted chasing after a fake ideal?

He looks back on this time fondly... and the Kirk we see in the movies looks different because the REAL Kirk had an awakening, and now is happily living out semi-retirement on a space freighter with her new husband.

[Reply](#)

- [Heradite](#)Zack Handlen  
2/20/14 2:22am

I'm not going to disagree with the criticisms presented of Turnabout Intruder but I did like the episode despite them: I think it's because of the great concept of having to prove that Kirk and Janice switched bodies. I think the concept was sound, it had great tension, it's just the logic of the execution that's icky.

[Reply](#)

- [Oscar Triana](#)Zack Handlen  
10/16/12 4:25pm

Well, last night I finished watching TOS for the first time and revisiting TNG since I was a kid. Took me a little more than a year since Netflix LatinAmerica launched. I read ALL the AV reviews for both series and it was really fun. Thanks to Zack and to all the mysterious users for the spot on comments.

[Reply](#)

- [allenshull](#)Zack Handlen  
10/28/11 6:00pm

Love the article and the series, but I think that "brutal" "Yes, it did happen. But that was 5,000 years ago. And she is dead now" is a reference to Marlowe's \_Jew of Malta\_:

FRIAR BARNARDINE: Thou hast committed—BARABAS: Fornication: but that was in another country; /  
And besides, the wench is dead.

[Reply](#)

- [Conscience\\_of\\_a\\_conservative](#)Zack Handlen  
1/20/17 6:26pm

After watching star trek again and paying more closely to season three i see that after season three star trek wasn't killed, it committed suicide. All my favorite episodes are in season one. Turn about intruder is as poorly written a plot as one can find

[Reply](#)

- [Chico McDirk](#)Zack Handlen  
3/09/10 10:55am

All hail Grand Nagus Zack  
"It was fun. Oh my..."

Seriously, this column was all kinds of fun. Thank you.

[Reply](#)

- [zhirzzh](#)Zack Handlen  
3/05/10 11:33am

"Turnabout Intruder"  
OBJECTION! That was...objectionable...

[Reply](#)

*Star Trek: Star Trek V: The Final Frontier / Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*

By [Zack Handlen](#)

Published March 12, 2010

[Comments \(273\)](#)



God help me, but I enjoy *Star Trek V: The Final Frontier*. It is, no question, a not very good movie. The story is clumsy, the script is packed full of corny jokes which have to violate basic precepts of common sense to exist, and one of the major themes is so childishly simplistic that it wouldn't be out of place in an episode of *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*. This is the only *Star Trek* film that William Shatner directed, and it has the thick, hammy stink of Shatnering throughout. The nicest thing you can say about it, apart from a handful of good lines and a couple decent ideas, is that it's relatively short, coming in at 103 minutes. This is the one even *Trek* fans have a hard time defending. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* was a self-serious, tedious mess, but at least it didn't play like outtakes from *Gilligan's Island In Space*.

But again, I still kind of enjoy it. Re-watching *Star Trek V* for the umpteenth time for this review, I had the usual problem distancing myself from nostalgia. I saw *Final Frontier* in theaters with my dad and my sister, and I adored it. (I was ten, so I adored just about anything, ie, *Hook*. Plus, we did a double feature that day of *V* and *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade* which, whatever you think of the quality of either movie, that is kind of the most awesome day ever.) I owned the novelization, read it half a dozen times. (I also had the novelization of *Indiana Jones And The Last* okay you probably don't give a damn about that.) I thought it was hilarious and creepy and moving, and it was in space, which was so freakin' sweet. I thought, "What does God need with a star-ship?" was up there as one of the greatest movie lines ever. Because it's *true*, dammit. What *does* God need with a star-ship?

And you know what? That *is* a good line. There aren't many moments in *V* that really work, but there are a few. And, while I'm open to discussion on the actual artistic merits of both, I'd definitely rather sit through the Adventures of Sybok the Magic Vulcan than have to endure all six years of *The Motion Picture* again. I'm not a huge fan of camp, and there's a lot of that here, but if it's awful, than at least it's energetically so. The best way to watch *Final Frontier* is to imagine the whole thing was written by a ten year-old, high on glue-sniffing, and just so damn excited after seeing "Where No Man Has Gone Before." "Oh man, so there's a Vulcan—only he's got feelings and stuff! And he's Spock's brother, only, like, a half-brother! And he *steals* the *Enterprise*! And Kirk falls off a mountain, but Spock *catches* him! And they go through this GIANT SPACE BARRIER THING. And there are KLINGONS, and one of them is a hot chick, and then everybody meets God, only God is a total dick, so it's not actually God, and Sybok makes everybody

happy but then he has to die to save Kirk, and Kirk is like, "The hell?" The *hell*. And there's a cat chick with, like, three boobs. WOOOOO."

*V*'s actual script is very third-season, with all kinds of potentially rewarding ideas introduced at the start, only to bog down in stupidity until an ending that doesn't so much resolve everything as find the path to least resistance towards the end credits. The passage through the Great Barrier, the search for God and Eden, Sybok's weird "I feel your pain" powers—all of these could've worked. Sure, it's a grab-bag of original series concepts, but that's not automatically a bad thing. Movies based on popular television shows don't have to be about concluding an on-going story-line. They can also serve as a greatest-hits package, ala *The Fugitive*, giving concepts that the show introduced a chance to play out on a larger, better-funded backdrop. Most importantly, there's enough here to make a good story out of, without having to resort to padding or redundancy.

Obviously, that's not what we get. The Great Barrier voyage doesn't make sense—ships can't get through it, except when one really wants to? (In the novelization, there's a subplot about Sybok having access to a special kind of shield design that lets them pass through unscathed; the Klingons are able to copy it. It also would've worked if the Barrier, which presumably was put in place to keep Anti-God from escaping, was weakening on its own, thus allowing Anti-God to send Sybok a vision. But instead we're supposed to assume it's a triumph of hope.) And Sybok's powers are hilariously ill-defined. At first it seems like he's using the Vulcan mind meld to break down his victims/followers' psychic barriers and give them happy thoughts, but later we find out all that "secret pain" talk is actually not bullshit. In the universe of *V*, everyone has one horrible secret in their past that's making them sad, and as soon as Sybok forgives them, they're peachy. Again, this is a ten year-old's concept of psychological damage: "Mommy drinks because she wasn't nice to her sister and then her sister got hit by a bus! Daddy doesn't love me because his dog died." Kirk has a big "I need my pain!" speech, and that, apparently, closes the issue, in a way that means absolutely nothing.

The Klingon threat is, a few dramatic moments aside, pointless, and Anti-God is distressingly easy to defeat. (Do the guns kill him at the end?) There's a bizarre moment after Kirk gets beamed aboard the Klingon ship where Spock's presence is introduced with all the drama of a Big Reveal, like we were supposed to think he was dead or something—I can't decide if there was a dropped sub-plot, or if Shatner was trying to milk the relationship for some empty drama. But what really kills this movie is the horrible, horrible humor. If you thought the jokes in *Star Trek IV* were too broad (and some of them were), there are gags in *V* that will send you 'round the bend. Like Spock "surprising" Kirk in the middle of mountain climbing for no damn good reason. (Check out Shatner's body double!) Or Spock's "marsh-melons." Or Uhura's naked fan dance. Or Scotty's "I know this ship like the back of my hand, but apparently I'm blind for some reason because I'm going to walk directly into the ceiling. Seriously, somebody should check me for cataracts, this isn't funny, it's terrifying."

It's just... I can't bear to hate this. I understand why all these jokes are terrible (the Uhura thing makes no sense, because they have to take a shuttlecraft back to the *Enterprise* to get her), but for all its myriad of faults, this is not a cookie cutter movie, and it's not as blandly cheerless as many of the later *Trek* films. (I know many people love *First Contact*, and it has its moments, but the *Next Generation* cast, apart from Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner, just suck on toast on the big screen.) It's terrible, but it's the kind of terrible I can be endlessly fascinated with because it's so personal, and passionately meant. I can deal with awful sincerity. I wouldn't recommend it to others, but I can't bring myself to despise it.

Sincerity is also one of *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*'s strengths, which is a relief; I can't imagine what it would be like if the last *Trek* movie with the original cast was a tedious, muddled waste of time. (Well, okay, let's try it. I think it would focus mostly on Shatner, and it would work as some kind of bridge to the *Next Gen* cast, and there would be a lot of drama in showing the death of Kirk, but the actual death would be embarrassingly mundane, like him falling off a bridge or tripping or something, thus betraying the expectations of hundreds of thousands of fans who wanted to see their hero get the ending he deserved. Sounds hideous, doesn't it? Thank god *no such movie exists*.) With Nicolas Meyer, the director of what remains the franchise's single best installment, back in the hot-seat, and telling a fun, solidly plotted story with some real-world significance, *Country* doesn't have *Wrath of Khan*'s emotional scope, but it's entertaining, non-insulting, and respectful.

So you've got the Cold War coming to an end in the early nineties, and you've got a race in the *Star Trek* universe who's antagonism has largely been a riff on American/Soviet relations. Plus, given the events of *Next Gen*, you know that the Federation and the Klingon Empire made friends eventually. Why not take the last official outing of Kirk, Spock, McCoy, and the rest to show the first clumsy steps of peace? For a show that strove so hard for social significance in its original run, it's surprising how few of the *Trek*'s big screen outings tried to get topical. Obviously a movie has different time concerns than a TV show, but apart from *Star Trek IV*'s "save the whales" message, this is a franchise that's been denying itself one of its source material's most striking and honorable goals. *VI* does a good job of making up for lost time. The symbolism might occasionally verge on heavy-handed, but that's in keeping with the original show as well. *VI*'s concerns with the failing Klingon Empire (which collapses not through war but poor resource management, nudge nudge) are dated in the best kind of way, a fitting send off for a group of characters and actors and their time in history.

The plot is, much like *V*, a collection of familiar tropes: the *Enterprise* is sent to meet the Klingon Chancellor (David Warner!), things go horribly, Kirk and McCoy end up falsely accused, Spock has to work to save them, and so on. The details change, but that old-school conspiracy vibe is nothing new, and the message that not everyone in government is terribly fond of peace shouldn't blow anyone's minds. (It's also interesting how some of these things mirror Meyer's other big *Trek* movie. There's even a main bad guy who likes quoting the classics!) What makes *Undiscovered Country* a success is that it's tightly constructed and polished, professionals working in roles they've spent much of their lives perfecting, given one last chance to do everything right. Watching it now, even know the various mechanisms of the plot, it's still very easy to get caught up in the clockwork.

A confession: for a long time I wasn't a huge fan of *VI*, and while I enjoy seeing it, I'm disappointed by its scope. As I've mentioned before, I'm more a fan of the *Trek* episodes that dealt with weird aliens and mind-bending sci-fi. Political significance notwithstanding, this is a murder mystery, and not a particularly difficult one at that.

Christopher Plummer is so obviously a villain that you almost expect him to turn out a red herring, and while having Spock's protege (who, according to trivia, would've been Saavik if Kirstie Alley would've agreed to return; I'm kind of glad she didn't) turn out to be a traitor is a twist, her reveal that just about every single character who was pushing for war was involved in setting Kirk up isn't. I'm going to go back to praising *VI* in the next paragraph, because it deserves praise, but I feel I'd be remiss here if I didn't at least mention my reservations. The operatic impact of *Khan* is lacking here, and what you essentially have is a really excellent two-parter that got a theatrical release. It may be nit-picky to begrudge something that works far better than it had any right to for not being brilliant, but I begrudge it all the same.

There is *some* emotion to all the intrigue, thankfully. Meyer once again refuses to downplay the age of his leads, and while *Khan* focused on Kirk's impending sense of mortality, *Undiscovered Country* focuses on the question of relevance. More than once, a character wonders if they've reached the age where they can no longer adapt to the changing times, and while it's no surprise that the answer is, "Of course not," there's still a bittersweet tinge to the discussion. Kirk has a hard time trusting Klingons because of his dead son (hey, remember him?), but his co-workers are just as suspicious, and the screenplay does an expert job of showing that prejudice without becoming overly didactic. The dinner scene between Klingons and humans (and one half-human, half-Vulcan) is a great example, and one of the movie's highlights, although the Shakespeare quotes get old fast.

*VI* manages to give everybody something to do: Chekov gets good lines (sure, the *Cinderella* joke is terrible, but I thought "Guess who's coming to dinner" was actually kind of funny), Uhura comes up with the tail-pipe idea (with an assist from Spock), Scotty gets to take out the assassin at the end, and Sulu even has his own ship, the *Excelsior* (which comes with a cameoing Christian Slater). Everyone is part of the team, and, unlike *V*, everyone gets to maintain their dignity. *VI* also pulls off the trick of being moderately self-aware without falling into self-parody, from McCoy's "What is it with you, anyway?" after Kirk gets a kiss from Iman, to Kirk's frustration at being rescued just before the bad guy could reveal his plans. It's the kind of audience winking that rewards viewers for having a history with the show without undercutting the integrity of the fictional universe.

For me, *VI* will always be good, but not quite great, for the reasons I outlined above. I was dismissive of it for a long time, which was unfair; I have a hard time denying this isn't the second best of the *Trek* films, and the more I watch it, the more I respect it. I would've liked something more heart-wrenching, especially seeing as this was the last time out. We could've had a death that lasted longer than the next entry. But I can understand playing things conservatively, especially after the cock-up of *V*. We're not quite done with Shatner, Nimoy, Kelly, Nichols, Doohan, and Takei just yet

(see Stray Observations)(also, screw you, Koenig!), but this is the last we'll see their faces on screen, and while the movie fan in me would've liked more, the *Trek* fan is just happy that the *Enterprise* went sailing into the sunset, crew intact. And yes, I got a chill from all those signatures at the end.

#### Grades:

**Star Trek V: The Final Frontier: D+**

**Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country: A-**

#### Stray Observations:

- I didn't really talk about *Final Frontier* pulling the "oh hey, a major character has a family member we've never heard of before" trick, but it's silly, and it only really serves to stop Spock from shooting Sybok. (Although half-brother or not, I believe he would've fired. At the very least, he could've winged him.)
- It is surprisingly easy to steal a star-ship, isn't it.
- Speaking of the triple-breasted cat chick (somebody clearly saw *Total Recall*, and felt that Furries were under represented), she fights with Kirk, Kirk throws her off his back in a tank of water, and she—dies instantly? How the hell does that work?
- Weird how everybody can see McCoy and Spock's "secret pain" when Sybok goes to work.
- I could spend all day pointing out *Star Trek V*'s flaws. Gah, that bit where Scotty walks into the ceiling is *so* dumb.
- I know Meyer loves *Hamlet* and all, but he does realize "the undiscovered country" is death, right?
- I've got good news and bad news. Bad news is, I'll be taking next week off. Good news is, I'm doing that so I'll have enough time to watch all of *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, for a write-up that'll hit the site on Friday, March 26th.

#### DISCUSSION

- Community (273)
- Pending

Sort by:

Popular

- [Eponymous](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:06pm

Excellent takes on both films

Especially on The Final Frontier. I realize that it's a bad movie and it has a lot of problematic elements, but it does move with a sort of goofy energy that can't help but be a little endearing. What I would add is that the movie had a few surprisingly good action setpieces—the shuttle crash was pretty exciting (despite being a little low-budget), and I thought the scene where the Enterprise went through the Great Barrier was pretty well done as well—it inspired that sense of wonder that Star Trek can at its best. Shatner's direction isn't the greatest here, but most of the stuff that gets singled out here had to have been stuff that was written in the script. What can you really do with a three-breasted cat woman that isn't ridiculous? V is at least a Star Trek movie, while some of those TNG movies don't even feel like that. Nemesis in particular.

#### [Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:11pm

Where's that guy who always talks about the music? Because Jerry Goldsmith owns The Final Frontier.

#### [Reply](#)

- [Oliver Miller](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:12pm



Shatner originally wrote the script. I read somewhere about the original version, before they got people to change it. He is very... batshit insane.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:21pm

I have to agree that Nemesis is, by far, worse than V. The rock climbing scene is corny and all, but at least it's over pretty quick. That dune-buggy bit was embarrassing and it just kept going and going and going.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:24pm

Nemesis is the worst. IMO:

11: Nemesis  
10: V  
9: I  
8: Generations  
7: Insurrection  
6: First Contact  
5: III  
4: IV  
3: VI  
2: Abrams  
1: II

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:26pm

It's nice to find someone who has the same opinion on V that I do. I enjoy the film, even though it's horrible. The humor is excruciating, but I love the "What does God need with a starship" line, the "I need my pain" speech, and the hokey-ness of the campfire scenes. I know everyone hates the row your boat stuff, but I've liked it since I was a kid.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:33pm

My Ranking:

1) Khan  
2) VI  
3) First Contact  
4) Abrams  
5) IV  
6) III  
7) V  
8) Nemesis  
9) Insurrection  
10) Generations  
11) TMP

[Reply](#)

- [J. Goo](#)Eponymous

3/12/10 1:55pm

Ranking (best to worst):

Khan  
Voyage Home  
First Contact  
Abrams  
Undiscovered Country  
Search for Spock  
Generations  
TMP  
Insurrection  
Final Frontier  
Nemesis

The top four I'd recommend to everyone; the bottom four I wouldn't recommend to anyone.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 1:59pm

1) Khan  
2) Undiscovered Country  
3) First Contact

4-7 (tie)) Generations, Save The Whales, Search for Spock, Bratty Kirk Gets Lucky

8) TMP  
9) Insurrection  
10) Nemesis  
11) Final Frontier

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:02pm

Nemesis is bad, bad bad! But at least something happens in it, unlike Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:04pm

Agreed that it is a true B movie, which would be fine and in keeping with TOS if only past and future entries hadn't been so serious and good.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:06pm

But Insurrection has F. Murray Abraham.

[Reply](#)

- [gottacook2](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:27pm

ST V's big stupid moment, for me, is the scene in the huge maintenance shaft (how many dozens of decks are there in ST V's Enterprise!?) and the fact that, just for the sake of mirroring the opening fall-off-a-cliff rescue scene, there is another long fall, etc. Any Trek fan with half a brain would assume,

rightly, that if the Enterprise contained such a multideck maintenance shaft or whatever it was, there would normally be no reason for the ship's artificial gravity to be activated within it - why risk a fall?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:39pm

"Any Trek fan with half a brain would assume, rightly, that if the Enterprise contained such a multideck maintenance shaft or whatever it was, there would normally be no reason for the ship's artificial gravity to be activated within it - why risk a fall? "

Have any of these hemi-corticated Trek fans seen artificial gravity deliberately varied on the ship?

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:42pm

Good points. STV is deep in the "so bad, it's good" territory. That's why there's so many snarky, ironic reviews of that movie (because, God, all the things you can make fun of!) as opposed to, say, Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 2:47pm

Tall - have you seen the Directors Cut of TMP? they actually cut about 16 minutes out of it, and it's much better)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:02pm

Hmmm. The ranking here are pretty good, but why is III always so low? I still really like III. It's basically a transition film, but I think it has more good moments in it than any of the TNG films, and perhaps even than the Abrams one. I mean, the stealing of the Enterprise, "Klingon bastards killed my son", the emotional impact of blowing up the Enterprise, the McCoy bar scene, "don't call me tiny," etc.

Generation is pretty fucking awful, in my opinion. I enjoyed the look of it when I was a teenager and watched it in the theater. The moment it was over and I thought about it, I realized it was actually quite shitty.

1. Kahn
2. Undiscovered
3. Spock
4. Abrams
5. Voyage
6. Contact
7. Frontier
8. Motion
9. Generations
10. Nemesis
11. Insurrection

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:03pm

I still had a hard time getting through it. Too boring.

[Reply](#)

- [Dogstyle Afternoon](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:03pm

Not even Anthony Motherfucking Zerbe could help Insurrection.

"Ok, so it's a planet... that heals people who go to it... and the people who inhabit it came from somewhere else... but the Enterprise crew must stop the 'bad guys' from kicking those people off of it because the 'bad guys' want to use it to—wait. Is this right? Cure billions of people who have incurable diseases? Why are they considered the 'bad guys' again?"

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:30pm

Especially comparing Insurrection with Kirk's treatment of a similar "paradise" planet in This Side of Paradise, Insurrection is irredeemably awful.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:31pm

The worst thing about V, the VERY worst thing about it, is that it contains DeForest Kelley's best scene in any of the movies by a country mile. He is OUTSTANDING in the scene where he faces up to having practiced euthanasia on his father, only to find that shortly after a cure for his condition was found, and to have such a powerful scene pissed away in a "so bad its good" film is a real shame. DeForest is genuinely great in that scene and really shows that he can still pull his dramatic weight when given the chance.

I still feel Nemesis was a "transitional" movie, that it was moving from the blandness of Insurrection and comfortable TNG mode to something else. There are occasional moments of directorial flourishes which should have aided the film, had there been a stronger script to support them. It's a failure, and a big one, but at least it shows a modicum of ambition, which is a LOT more than can be said for Insurrection.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:33pm

Not to mention there was maybe fifty people on the whole damn planet. Star Trek writers have always had zero sense of scale.

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:43pm

@ St. God

III is still the best odd-numbered Trek movie, though (if you don't count Abrams'). It's just that so many of the even-numbered films are so good.

There's six really good Trek films that stand-up, while the other five have serious flaws.

[Reply](#)

- [EdKed](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:47pm

St. God: I think a lot of people retroactively downgraded "III" when some smartass came up with the whole "even numbered Trek films good, odd numbered bad" thing.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 3:56pm

Could be. I can see an argument for it not being A Great Film, but I still think it is a pretty good Trek film. Just for some of the moments alone, really. Jesus, the stealing of the Enterprise scene, and some of the camaraderie, is worth the price of admission.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 4:22pm

Here, lemme fix that list for ya:

1. The Wrath Of Khan
2. The Undiscovered Country
3. The Voyage Home
4. Star Trek (2009)
5. The Search For Spock
6. First Contact
7. The Motion Picture
8. Generations
9. The Final Frontier
10. Nemesis
11. Insurrection

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 4:24pm

III is a good movie, mainly for the reasons St. God mentioned, but it can't compete with the even-numbered movies (except for crappy Nemesis).

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 4:30pm

Does it make INSURRECTION better or worse when you factor in that they stole the entire plot for AVATAR?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 4:48pm

III is definitely entertaining, if uneven. But the same can be said for several middling-quality ST films, including Generations and TMP.

The Voyage Home, however, gets downgraded for basically being the final reset button on II.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 6:13pm

Since everyone else is doing it

- 1) Wrath of Kahn
- 2) Undiscovered Country
- 3) Abrams
- 4) First Contact
- 5) Search for Spock
- 6) Voyage Home
- 7) Motion Picture
- 8) Generations
- 9) Final Frontier
- 10) Nemesis
- 11) Insurrection

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 7:14pm

I can go on record for hating ST3 Search For Spock in theaters, before anyone came up with the even/odd concept. There's a lot of little reasons, like the fairly stupid villain, but the big reason was that it ruined Saavik for teenage me.

It's really saying something but that performance was one of the worst in the movie franchise, and that was even more disappointing because she had seemed like a decent and viable long-term character in ST2, and one of the only times in any franchise that a late gender/age-balancer showed the promise of working out.

I'll give the movie another shot sometime, since you guys speak highly of it, but I still have a bad taste in my mouth for that.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Eponymous  
3/12/10 10:48pm

Which is the TNG movie that starts with a closeup of Picard's eye?

Frakes directed it, I think. I found that one well-directed, almost good, although I didn't like the story at all. Bad story but well-made, if that makes sense. Lots of good sequences. Enjoyable scenes.

[Reply](#)

- [The Late DentArthurDent](#)Eponymous  
3/13/10 5:55am

The one nice thing I can say about Final Frontier is that they seemed to be trying to recapture the mood of the series. The plot feels like it could come from one of the original episodes (though, as Zack said, too bad it feels like a 3rd season episode).

It seems most recent Trek movies - even JJ Abrams fun movie from last year - seem to devolve into simplistic "obsessed tragic villain with superweapon and grudge against one of our heroes wants to destroy Earth! Spaceship battle and a little hand-to-hand combat resolves all!" Final Frontier tries to be a little more than that. It fails miserably, but at least it tries.

And, like Zack, I would also describe Undiscovered Country as "good but not great". The whole middle act of that film, with Spock solving a silly murder mystery on the Enterprise while Kirk has a pointless trip to a prison planet - is tedious and adds nothing to the film. The generally awful dialogue, clunky lines, and endless quoting by the characters is equally tedious, and seems like a failed attempt to make the film feel more profound than it actually is. It also has its share of terrible humour: remember the scene on the bridge with the Klingon dictionaries? But, at least the film has an overall more serious tone and a few good setpieces (like the assassination sequence).

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)Eponymous  
3/13/10 10:04am

Agreed about VI being overrated. But I also think IV is. I'm in the pro-III crowd. It might be the second best one after Khan. The TNG movies are wack, though I haven't seen First Contact and I need to give it a fair go. Actually VI is so grim and empty I might put V ahead of it. V is at least fun with lots of memorable scenes. It's hard for me to compare the Abrams movie because so much is different. It's like Muppet Babies, but I mean that in a good way.

[Reply](#)

- [Gargantuan Vermillion](#)Eponymous  
3/13/10 10:08am

The last TNG ep would have been the best of all the TNG movies.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Eponymous  
3/14/10 8:27am

@gargantuan - agreed. the writers even said as much once, IIRC. They were working on both scripts simultaneously and later reflected that "All Good Things" was the better story. On the big screen, that could've been a really good movie.

[Reply](#)

- [Mr. Greene](#)Eponymous  
3/14/10 11:51pm

1. The Wrath of Khan
2. Star Trek (Abrams)
3. The Undiscovered Country
4. The Search for Spock
5. First Contact
6. The Voyage Home
7. The Motion Picture
8. Generations
9. Nemesis
10. Insurrection.
11. The Final Frontier

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Eponymous  
3/15/10 9:31am

@Doctor Fan: Nemesis was trying WAY too hard to be TNG's Khan, to the point of stealing several script beats. FAIL.

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)Eponymous  
3/19/13 5:38pm

YES...I echo your comments. The movie is endearing. I totally loved the WARP SPEED NOW scene, even with the bad effects. And I totally agree on Nemesis as well...just not a fun movie and had so many continuity errors...

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)Bad Horse  
3/19/13 5:39pm

Agreed...Nemesis is a well made movie but frustrating continuity errors and a plot that really is kind of boring...

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)Cattivo  
3/19/13 5:42pm

Yes...I can re-watch this movie than I can Nemesis. It is charming in its badness and Kelly delivers a great performance during his "pain" scene.

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)Prole Hole  
3/19/13 5:46pm

Yes...DeForest Kelley's "pain" scene was awesome...just rewatched the V last night and forgot how good it was.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [J Goo](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:29pm

Keonig?

Giving somebody a "screw you" is redundant if you can't even get his name right.

In terms of Trek 6: I'd give it a B. The Cinderella joke IS awful, but it's not as disrespectful as what they did to Uhura. She's the ship's translator and she doesn't speak Klingon? She's the ship's translator, and even with a phrase book she butchers the grammar? That's at least as embarrassing and out of character as Scotty walking into a wall.

Also, the peace conference scene is rushed and trite.

But it does have Red Forman in it. The B turns into a B+ if you say "dumbass" after each of his lines.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 1:37pm

It's pretty hilarious in context of Abrams trek also, where Uhura can distinguish Klingon dialects by ear IIRC.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 1:53pm

You guys realize the "screw you" was just joking about how he wasn't one of the voice actors of the Star Trek Animated Series, right?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 1:56pm

Say what you will about the Abrams movie (and I have a lot of bad things to say about it), it did treat the characters with dignity.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 1:57pm



And why does the Enterprise have piles of leather-bound Klingon/English dictionaries? I love Nicholas Meyer and his attention to idiosyncratic details (like the kitchen), but that one is a bit of a stretch.

But it's funny!

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:05pm

Uhura wasn't the translator, she was the Communications Officer. Not the same thing. She was never shown having a facility with languages, AFAIK.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:06pm

Koenig's Screw You

Is funny because he was the first cast member to write for his fellow cast mates in Star Trek The Animated Series episode "Infinite Vulcan"

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:09pm

Now in haiku form:

Koenig gets a lifetime pass cuz  
B5 is the tits

[Reply](#)

- [J. Goo](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:09pm

I knew that. But it was an unfortunate juxtaposition of jestful disrespect and actual (albeit inadvertent) disrespect.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:09pm

haiku fail

[Reply](#)

- [SnaitN](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:17pm

Fail or not, B5 IS the tits. And his character was even more so.

[Reply](#)

- [Stumpy](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:20pm

Maybe she contracted "Irmodic Syndrome" (aka Space-Alzheimer's) and forgot it.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 2:25pm

I realized the context for the screw you, but it's still a bit borderline given the circumstances. Most of the regular posters here are probably nerdy enough to know that Chekov wasn't in TAS. But if someone read it without knowing that it might come off wrong.

as for the translation thing - that's a truly regrettable scene. I get that it's funny, but it really makes no sense at all. If the universal translator would be recognized, why not just use the universal translator to tell you what to say, then repeat what it told you? I'm all for a joke here and there, but not at the cost of common sense.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)J Goo

3/12/10 2:59pm

I didn't notice that they were Co-ed, but that's a neat detail. I like the sea-faring details that Meyers adds. and to be fair, the old-school steering wheel in ten-forward from V was a nice touch as well)

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)J Goo

3/12/10 3:11pm

If I recall, it wasn't Koenig's fault he wasn't a voice actor on the animated series, right? They couldn't afford to pay all the actors, and couldn't afford apparently the extra buck fifty to pay Walter to do a voice.

Another fact that makes Futurama's Sulu/Chekov joke so funny.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)J Goo

3/12/10 3:53pm

Someone above mentioned the attention to detail, specifically the kitchen scene as being something good in VI.

That scene always bugged the shit out of me. I can understand why the Enterprise might have a small kitchen, for those who enjoy the hobby aspects of cooking and creating with food.

But most of the food for the crew is formed with replicators. Why in living fuck would anyone make a gigantic, huge-ass pot of mashed potatoes? The only reason that whole scene exists is for the effect of disintegrating the pot, but leaving the potatoes behind.

The circumstances behind the effect, however are contrary to the universe it is meant to inhabit.

Also - it brings up bizarre questions about the functional aspects of phaser technology. How does the beam know what and how far to disintegrate something? If it just vapourizes the pot and not the potatoes, why when you shoot a person does it not just disintegrate their clothes, and leave the person standing?

And if a phaser can simply disintegrate someone's clothing, leaving them totally unharmed, why hasn't Kirk used this as a pickup technique?

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)J Goo

3/12/10 4:15pm

1) Have you ever had replicated mashed potatoes? They suck. The Enterprise has a kitchen because replicated food all tastes like replicator.

2) Phasers tune to the atomic number and density of the first solid thing they hit, so if the beam hits clothing, it will disintegrate organic materials, while if it hits a pot, it will disintegrate metals. What do they teach you kids in fanwank school these days anyway?

3) How do you know he hasn't?

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 4:27pm

@alurin

Thanks.

For being nerdier than me.

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 4:28pm

The "screw you" to Koenig is out of place given that he wrote at least one of the episodes of the TAS, as well.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 4:50pm

Here's the in-universe explanation for Uhuru not speaking Klingon: they forgot to teach it to her when they had to re-teach her everything that was in her brain prior to it being wiped by NOMAD.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 4:52pm

So if you wear aluminum foil clothes, you're immune to phaser fire?

That would explain Angelique Petitjohn's outfit then.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 4:53pm

I was just going to say it has to do with Plotanium, but alurin's explanation is better.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob KJ](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 7:50pm

Another reason to respect the Koenig: author of "The Machiavellian Principle", the only original cast Star Trek stage play (it even had Kirstie Alley). There are apparently crazy stories about the performance floating around.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)J Goo  
3/12/10 11:32pm

@ Sheldon Cooper's Libido

alurin's probably right - in-universe - but the real reason for the kitchen etc. is because Nicholas Meyer is not a Trek nerd and refused to let continuity like "replicators" get in the way of potentially interesting story ideas.

[Reply](#)

- [Stumpy](#)J Goo  
3/13/10 12:58am

My fanwank for the kitchen scene is this: the ingredients of the mashed potatoes were all probably replicated, a cook still needs to put them all together though before serving. It's not until the 24th century, the Federation invented magic. Also: "TEA! EARLY GREY, HOT!"

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)J Goo  
3/13/10 8:03am

when exactly did replicators come around? My understanding was that it was sometime between TOS and TNG, which is why the crew had to eat those multi-colored food cubes in TOS. Maybe it wasn't until after TUC.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)J Goo  
3/13/10 10:36am

I think there's been replicators all along. Nurse Chapel had ice cream memory cards for the Children who Shall Lead, and I think you see people using replicators in some early S1 episodes. Maybe pastel cubes were a delicacy.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)J Goo  
3/13/10 12:17pm

Yeah, I think there were replicators in TOS. I mean, I know they had replicators for non-food items, but I also have a memory of food trays coming out of little slots in the wall.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)J Goo  
3/14/10 3:01pm

The pot/potato thing is just bad form.

If you have read your Star Trek: The Next Generation Technical Manual, you would know that phasers (hand or otherwise) simply have a power setting that determines the level of energy directed at the target, in megawatts, if I'm not mistaken.

Something that ticked onto an object's atomic density/makeup would be a phase disruptor.

Sorry alurin, but you pulled that out of your ass and you know it.

[Reply](#)

- [Concrete Donkey](#)J Goo  
3/14/10 3:04pm

Also, that same manual describes why TOS warp and TNG warp are not the same. So TOS episodes have seen the Enterprise flung around at warp 14, but on TNG, warp 10 is the maximum (theoretical) speed.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [D.N. Nation](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:11pm

First Contact

"I know many people love First Contact, and it has its moments, but the Next Generation cast, apart from Patrick Stewart and Brent Spiner, just suck on toast on the big screen."

I loved First Contact when I saw it as a kid, and it's still good for some rootin' tootin' Borg shootin', but it doesn't really hold up well otherwise. Just too many plot holes to take, and the movie completely butchers Picard's character. As well as how Trek treated the Borg on TV.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:15pm

Thank you. People always think I'm nuts when I say that.

[Reply](#)

- [Nerd Paragon](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:19pm

"THE LINE MUST BE DRAWN HERE-H! THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER!"

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:34pm

Well, the Borg had been getting weaker toward the end of TNG (I, Borg; Descent). I think on the TNG DVDs somewhere Michael Piller or someone talks about the difficulty of writing new ways to stop an unstoppable enemy. It's pretty much impossible without serious villain decay.

Retconning the Borg Queen into the Locutus story would have been more annoying to me if Alice Krige hadn't completely owned the role.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:47pm

Well, at least on TNG the Borg's decay was explained in non-self-contradictory terms. There's not really an explanation for why they sucked so bad on Voyager. Or why they have a queen. I don't care how hard Alice Krige rocked it, that was a bad idea.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:47pm

Actually, I find that First Contact holds up surprisingly well. It's true that the plot doesn't really make any sense, but that's really true for any time travel story. The real weakness is that, like all TNG episodes, it has an A story (the fight for the Enterprise, starring Picard and Data) and a B story (to give everyone else something to do). The B story mostly just dilutes the action. But even there, James Cromwell is awesome, and there's even a good scene with Troi and Riker, god help us all. They hit the Moby Dick references a bit hard, but hey, it's Star Trek. I would definitely rather watch Picard go batshit on the Borg drones on the holodeck than sit through any scene from V.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 1:48pm

The problem was, the Borg needed to be made weaker, otherwise what the hell? They could have wiped out everyone otherwise, and while that'd be a ballsy way to end a franchise, it wouldn't have held up for too long.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 2:01pm

I hated hated hated what they did to Picard's family in FC. Or was that Generations? Well, hated it anyway. And given what Picard has been through, you could easily argue dang near any character aberration on his part.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:06pm

First Contact is a great action movie and James Cromwell does save the sluggish B story.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:06pm

Jim: That was Generations, and the ends totally justify the means. "Now there will be no more Picards." God, Patrick Stewart fucking rules.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:07pm

It was Generations.

But yes, that was stupid.

But not as bad as what the Abrams movie did to Spock's family.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:14pm

What did they do with Picard's family? I haven't seen Generations in years, and all I can remember is Picard's fantasy world being a Dickens novel.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:18pm

They DIAFed offscreen.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:32pm

Know how you keep from running out of ways to defeat an unstoppable enemy? Don't bring them back so many damn times.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 2:59pm

Patrick Stewart could read the phone book and make you laugh or cry if he wanted, but killing his brother etc. was just a writer cheat to set up the fantasy family scene. We didn't need it.

Interesting point on what Abrams did, but Vulcans are such cold fish generally it didn't hit me the same way. Maybe if Patrick Stewart had played Spock...

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 3:04pm

The Borg definitely became the Daleks of Star Trek.

First Contact is the best TNG film. That being said, and it is fun to watch, the plot is infuriating in so many goddamn ways.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 3:18pm

The Borg are the Cybermen. Not the Cybermen of Star Trek, just the Cybermen. Same guys.

[Reply](#)

- [George Liquor](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 3:28pm

The Borg are the alien dance troupe from Captain EO. Tis true!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 3:35pm

Yay a chance to defend Voyager! Say what you like, but Scorpion is the best Borg story since Best Of Both Worlds by miles (and yes I include First Contact in that). Patrick Stewart is great in First Contact, as indeed is James "I make everything I'm in better, even My Own Worst Enemy" Cromwell, but Seven, 8472, fluidic space and a straight up outstandingly written and directed story? I'll take Scorpion every time.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 3:41pm

@JJF Murray Abrahams: (nice handle, by the way)

1) I more or less agree, except that in the B story we had to spend time with actors who don't really, shall we say, light up the screen, while in the A story we have Patrick Stewart ACTING, Brent Spiner ACTING, and even Alfre Woodard and Alice Krieg kicking ass and taking names.

2) Perhaps, but this is actually the second movie drawing on Moby Dick, following two episodes of TOS.

3) Agreed on the cameo (also the other cameo). No opinion on the Borg showing up on Enterprise because I didn't see it.

4. Yes.

5. Best use of the holodeck, ever.

[Reply](#)

- [D.N. Nation](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 3:48pm

Yeah, Scorpion owned.

And then they completely copped out by having the ship magically leave Borg Space in the next episode.

...

Even though they keep running into the Borg anyway.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)D.N. Nation  
3/12/10 4:02pm

Scorpion is the best Voyager episode and the best post-TNG Borg story because the Borg still have plenty of balls. Species 4781451204851245 or whatever just has more. Later on, the Voyager crew is actually able to steal shit off Borg ships and escape. Come the fuck on.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 4:25pm

I'll jump on the Scorpion bandwagon here, but I'd also add Dark Frontier to the awesome Borg episodes. I still get chills when the Borg completely decimate the planet. Hearing all those screams as they are assimilated in the cube is pretty haunting.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 4:36pm

Each of the TNG movies suffers from obvious attempts to force a TREK movie to be something it's not. They keep trying to make Picard an action hero because — well, because that's what happens in the movies, right? And it rarely worked. Still, I blame the studio for that, and I always got a kick out of seeing those dudes up on the big screen. Even when Spinner is forced to say the umpteenth variation on his "What is a joke?" schtick, he always makes it work.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 4:49pm

"They keep trying to make Picard an action hero because — well, because that's what happens in the movies, right? And it rarely worked."

Wrong. Picard is a great action hero. See First Contact.

[Reply](#)

- [Lazarou Monkey Terror](#)D.N. Nation

3/12/10 8:55pm

I want to hear more about the Aardvarks' cotton pantie afterlife idea!

[Reply](#)

- [sad tortoise](#)D.N. Nation

3/18/10 11:56am

Trekanosis is correct.

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)D.N. Nation

3/18/10 3:26pm

- 1) Wrath of Khan
- 2) Star Trek (2009)
- 3) Star Trek: TMP
- 4) Search for Spock
- 5) Voyage Home
- 6) Undiscovered Country

the end

I don't count Next Gen as canon Trek

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)D.N. Nation



3/20/10 5:30pm

It's always Christmas in Heaven, Jamesf.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Right Wingnut](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 1:50pm

Space Battles!

The final fight between Kirk and Chang is short, but very awesome. When I was a wee Trek fan, and I saw that torpedo go THROUGH THE ENTIRE FUCKING HULL, I was awed.

[Reply](#)

- [Stumpy](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 2:26pm

I remember standing up on the theater seat and cheering when the Bird of Prey got blown up (I was much smaller at the time). It only confused me though when the exact same footage was reused later in the next one.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 2:36pm

Once you've seen the enterprise get beat to hell and back as many times as we had dating back to TOS, it's hard to make a battle scene seem really threatening (for example, the action in Nemesis, which featured much more firepower but much less drama). But I can clearly remember thinking "Oh shit - they're really fucked this time" when that torpedo skewered the saucer.

[Reply](#)

- [mmy](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 2:57pm

Saw it on the big screen, and even in a podunk town such as mine, the entire audience roared and applauded. The beating that the Enterprise takes in that fight really sells the scene.

[Reply](#)

- [Tilden Katz](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 3:18pm

I was pretty young when "All Good Things" first aired, and I remember the part where the future Enterprise-D cuts through those Klingon cruisers like a knife through butter being pretty sweet.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 3:22pm

Yep. That was one awesome space battle - something Trek has struggled with both in tv and movies.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 3:28pm

Totally agree with the space battle in VI. Well done. Having Chang annoyingly quote and yell shit during it, taunting, made the point where he looks "oh shit" at them about to be destroyed. I am pretty sure I "whooped" in my seat in that part.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 4:18pm

The explosion of Chang's Bird of Prey was fucking sweet, the way first most of it exploded, and then the bridge exploded. Then the cheap bastards used the same fucking footage for Generations. Way to go, dudes.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 4:28pm

I loved Chang during that fight. My dad and I still shout out "CRY HAVOK AND LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR" from time to time. Usually when we can spin around in a chair.

[Reply](#)

- [Dumbledore Calrissian](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 6:26pm

That is actually one of the reasons why DS9 ended up being my favorite Star Trek. We are so used to this world, we get to see it torn apart by a brutal, large scale intergalactic war.

The best space battles were in Wrath of Kahn, Undiscovered Country "Lock in on the hit and FIRE!," the all too brief opening battle in First Contact, and pretty much all of the last seasons of DS9. Defiant FTW!

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 7:30pm

"CRY HAVOK AND LET SLIP THE DOGS OF WAR"

Plummer just clean lost his mind on that one, especially when his voice rises on "HAVOK". That was metal.

Defiant was a tough little ship. And pretty much my favorite Sci-Fi ship of all time.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 9:42pm

Nick Meyer was brilliant with his Trek space battles. Made space ships into ye olde sailing ships. Lose the shields, and you've got yourself an exciting fight.

An honest question for the TNG fans - did Picard's ship ever see battle fires and interior damage (aside from the movies)?

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 11:11pm

In "Yesterday's Enterprise" we see the alternate Enterprise-D get torn up (Riker gets his throat cut by debris, a fire burns uncontrollably on the bridge). Other than that, not really. They couldn't afford it. Voyager and DS9 showed a lot of battle damage, though.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 11:36pm

Now that I think of it, there wasn't that much on-screen damage in the original series either...more like dim lighting = the ship is in trouble. But we have "The Doomsday Machine" and a look at what \*could\* happen to a starship.

Glad to hear about some good old fashioned mayhem in DS9. I've been thinking about renting the full series, but my original reaction that the guy who played Sisko was such a terrible, terrible actor (without any equivalent goofy Shatner-like exuberance) is my excuse.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Right Wingnut

3/12/10 11:46pm

Fire effects can be expensive! But I'm sure it's happened a few times. Can't think of any examples offhand, at the moment.

Many a helmsman has been killed by Spontaneous Helm Control Station Explosion during battles, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Right Wingnut

3/13/10 12:13am

ALL HANDS ABANDON SHIP! ALL HANDS - \*KABOOM\*

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)Right Wingnut

3/13/10 12:44am

DS9 is the best trek series.

Avery Brooks is not a terrible actor (but he is a fairly theatrical actor- above and beyond even the theatrical demands of DS9).

Nana Visitor is hands down brilliant and everyone else did fine, fine work.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Right Wingnut

3/13/10 10:28am

DS9 is awesome but, like TNG, you have to wade through some awful early episodes to get to the good stuff. But it is absolutely worth it. The show was so deep characterwise that they even ended up with a few good Nog episodes. And they had one of the best Trek villains ever in Dukat. Avery Brooks was 100% over the top, but in the best possible way.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Right Wingnut

3/13/10 12:34pm

Naismith and Samuel are right. The first season often feels like rejected storylines from TNG, but Season 2 is actually pretty solid, and after that it's great.

Re: Nana Visitor—absolutely a standout. Practically all the interesting stuff that goes on in the first season happens to her. I always felt her character was very underrated, too. Perhaps it was partly her appearance (she's attractive, but not a sex symbol), but I largely think it was because she was legitimately feminine, and not "one of the guys" like other fanboy crushes, like, say, BSG's Starbuck. Then again, I liked Kira for the entire run of the show and I grew tired of Starbuck well before she became an angel.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Right Wingnut

3/13/10 1:25pm

I concur with the Admiral, Mr. Klugarsh, and Eponymous. DS9 was the best Trek series by a healthy margin. Like TNG, the first season is a bit weak, though the pilot is awesome, and it's never as weak as first season TNG, but it just kept getting better. By making a large part of the cast non-Starfleet, they

got around the stupid house rule that there be no conflict among the characters, and they also really started to use longer-form storytelling.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Right Wingnut  
3/14/10 1:44pm

I think Kira was so underrated has a lot to do with the fact that there were so many over-the-top scenery-devouring characters (Sisko, Dukat, Garak, Weyoun, Winn, Martok...I could go on endlessly), I think the great nuanced performances from Nana Visitor (and Rene Auberjonois) kind of get lost in the shuffle. I'd include Colm Meaney here, but they always threw him an "O'Brien Must Suffer" showcase episode every season or so.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Right Wingnut  
3/15/10 1:18pm

DS9 season 1 has TNG plots, but they are generally twistier and more character-oriented than TNG. I fell for at least a couple fakeouts in S1, where TNG would generally just run with the premise once it was established rather than undercut it. Tastes may vary, I guess. DS9 doesn't really have a bad season though.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Right Wingnut  
3/15/10 6:11pm

One of my favorite unintended TOS gags was an episode where Sulu gets knocked off his bridge chair and the chair falls over. Shatner (or somebody) picks the chair up to save the take and they ended up using it rather than doing another take.

Hilarious.

Anybody know what ep that's from? Am I talking to myself here?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cattivo](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:30pm

TAS

Awesome, looking forward to the article on TAS.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 1:54pm

Second that emotion!

Speaking of TAS, is there somewhere we can watch it without, you know, paying (legally, like the CBS site for TOS)? I'd like to catch up, from "Yesteryear" to "The Counterclock Incident"!

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 2:12pm

TAS FTW! Very much looking forward to that write-up. I liked the one with the Kzinti, and the one with Kukul Khan (sp?), and the one where Spock went back in time, and the one where Kirk and Spock got recruited into a rag-tag A Team to do something, and the one with the super-smart space elephants  
....

I liked The Animated Series, is what I'm trying to say.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 2:42pm

a quick google search suggests not.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 2:46pm

Yay!

I've been watching TAS for the first time (shut up) this very week. Its not great, but I've been thinking about all the things we would talk about if it was reviewed and, hooray!

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 2:47pm

It's only \$32.49 on amazon, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 2:49pm

I haven't seen an episode in roughly 30 years. So maybe I'm just thinking of how much I enjoyed it back then. But I'm sure it's still fun.

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 3:38pm

Honestly I have never seen TAS, it's the only Trek I have no contact with whatsoever. Can I get a few episode recommendations before next week so I can \*cough cough\* take a look?

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 4:23pm

Prole: Hmmm ... I'll say "Yesteryear", "How Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth", "The Time Trap", and "The Slaver Weapon". Those are pretty good (I thought) dramatic episodes. And maybe "The Jihad" and "The Eye Of The Beholder".

Just for laffs, check out "The Practical Joker".

<http://www.danhausertrek.co>...I didn't get those titles off the top of my head. I went to .

[Reply](#)

- [Just zis guy](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 8:29pm

"Beyond The Farthest Star" is also good.

The thing about the animated shows is that there was no special effects budget. If you want to show an alien with eight arms and three heads, all you have to do is draw it. On a live-action show, you couldn't do that. Not back then, anyway. Now, with CGI, sure. But not back then.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 9:35pm

Seeing that they had no problem re-doing the SFX for the DVDs of the original series, it would be awesome if they slapped all-new 21st-century animation behind the animated show's audio.

Based on re-watching only one episode since tuning into the original broadcast when I was a kid, I'm guessing that the short episode length leads to little characterization and mostly plot.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)Cattivo  
3/12/10 11:09pm

Zack, I'm really grateful that you're taking a week, or actually 2 weeks, to write up TAS. You had some legit reasons for \*not\* doing that, as I recall, when the idea was first broached some weeks ago in these comments. It represents a very real, uh, responsiveness of you and the AV Club editors to change your mind and fit it into the schedule.

So now that you're going to all the trouble, I feel responsible (I was one of the group requesting it), and very tense. What if they really, really suck? I haven't seen any these shows in over 30 years. And my memory of them is very heavily blurred by the Star Trek Logs books by Alan Dean Foster. (which were excellent)

Thanks for adopting the suggestion, and I hope the shows aren't too painful to sit thru.

@Prole: I think Just zis guy's list is good. I also want to mention The Counter-Clock Incident, but I'm not sure if that's because the episode was good or the novelization was good. Probably the book.

Yesteryear gets all the accolades as the best episode.

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)Cattivo  
3/13/10 12:34am

Good luck watching TAS- most of the writing is pretty terrible (25 in episodes that feel 2 hrs long). There are a couple of gems, and the sequel to Amok Time is rightfully a classic.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Cattivo  
3/13/10 8:07am

I've got to second Jim's comments - Thanks Zack!

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Cattivo  
3/14/10 11:57am

Thanks all!

[Reply](#)

- [PeterF](#)Cattivo  
3/18/10 3:31pm

More thanks Zack, and looking forward to your TAS review. Man, I loved me those Alan Dean Foster Log books when I was a kid.

Star Trek: Animated was probably the best and most ambitious Saturday morning cartoon ever, which isn't saying much, but still...

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [JammerJim](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 3:10pm

Nomenclature, people!

Trek movies go by their subtitle acronyms. Thus, "The Motion

Picture" is TMP, "Wrath of Khan" is TWOK, etc. Every time I see you guys typing "V" I have visions of red-shirted space lizards. It's very disconcerting.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 3:29pm

OK, then while we're on the subject, what would you call "Star Trek" - would you go with "11", "XI", "Star Trek", "The Abrams Star Trek"...

personally I favor ST 11, because I think it seems a bit silly to refer to a movie just by who directed it.

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 3:46pm

Most nerds I know call it "The Reboot".

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 4:09pm

By JammerJim's criteria, the eleventh Star Trek movie should be known as "".

[Reply](#)

- [JammerJim](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 4:50pm

I didn't make the rules, son.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 4:58pm

I refer to it as the Muppetbaby episode.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 7:11pm

I keep seeing lizard people every time someone calls it "V," too. But TFF is never going to catch on. It looks like teen lingo that Diablo Cody made up.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JammerJim

3/12/10 10:40pm

Kiddie Trek.

[Reply](#)

- [Adm Naismith](#)JammerJim

3/13/10 12:53am

'Most nerds I know call it [Abrams' 'Star Trek'] "The Reboot". '

I call it crap- talk about treating the characters badly- it made Sulu and Chekov look like incompetent boobs, among other things.

[Reply](#)

- [Ellsworth Toohey](#)JammerJim  
3/13/10 12:01pm

Acronyms make my head hurt.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)JammerJim  
3/13/10 1:32pm

"I call it crap- talk about treating the characters badly- it made Sulu and Chekov look like incompetent boobs, among other things. "

There are a lot of things I disliked about "", but that wasn't one of them. Chekov gets to do the fancy transporter trick, and while Sulu does make an elementary error getting the ship out of spacedock, he makes up for it later with his fencing skills.

The Abrams reboot generally gives the characters their due (e.g., Uhura's fancy translation skillz), it just gets everything else wrong.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)JammerJim  
3/13/10 9:58pm

Star Trek 90210

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)JammerJim  
3/15/10 3:03pm

I found ST90210 mostly entertaining and harmless in the theater, with a couple of minor hiccups (Like: What is Dr Cameron doing here, and why is she pregnant? And: Winona Ryder? Really?). But I left with my brow furrowed, and it was only later that I put my finger on what was so dissatisfying about it.

There is no room for "professionalism" in ST90210. TOS had a subtext of professionalism running all thru it: not always, but in most of the good episodes. But it doesn't exist in ST90210.

In TOS the Enterprise officers had risen to their posts by being really damn good. Uhura and Sulu stood out to contemporary audiences by being Black and Asian and coolly competent in their highly technical jobs. The big subplot in Corbomite Maneuver is about Mr Bailey's competence, and Kirk's judgment in promoting him. (Contrast Bailey on the bridge with Sulu's & Scotty's professionalism.) In Obsession Spock & McCoy confront Kirk in his quarters about his decisions, and they have an amazing conversation about Kirk's responsibilities and his discretion: a conversation dominated by professional obligations and accepted forms of address etc. In Turnabout Intruder the officers and crew mutiny (!) after violations of professional standards.

When Kirk runs into other starship captains, they are badasses. Capt Tracy has most of a planet buffaloed, and he beats Kirk at every turn. Even when overrun by the Yangs he's nowhere close to beaten. Matt Decker is broken and desperate, but he's still man enough to push around Spock and command the Enterprise. Tenacious motherfucker: you can see that he would be one tough customer under normal circumstances. Garth is crazy as a loon, yet still a threat to take over the Enterprise. Commodore Wesley is friendly enough, and he gets some of his ships destroyed when M5 launches a surprise attack. But he regroups and is about to destroy the ship when Kirk plays possum. In flashback, Capt Pike was a badass too.

In TOS Kirk had a career in his backstory. As a lieutenant he had been on the ship that got attacked by the blood-sucking cloud; also as a young officer he had visited the planet with the white gorilla and



the voodoo women. In Court Martial the computer reads out part of his record, and it's this huge list of commendations and honors. TOS Kirk worked his way up the ranks and earned a chance to command a ship.

In Star Trek 90210, you can graduate from the Academy and be captain your first day. Yay!

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)JammerJim  
3/18/10 8:59am

Well put, Jim. I'd add the same about TNG and DS9. You seldom got that feeling that these people don't belong at their jobs, and when you did there were consequences. Not quite so much with VOY and ENT, but still nothing like 90210.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord\\_Gaga](#)JammerJim  
3/19/10 8:51am

Wait, I partially take it back about TNG. I forgot about Wesley Crusher. Now I've got to forget about him again, dammit.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Dino](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 12:53pm

Hooray!

That's right, I haven't even read the article yet, I'm just so excited this one is finally here that I'm cheering ahead of time.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino  
3/12/10 1:00pm

HA. I've said it before, and I'll say it again: Handlen, you are one sweet, cool motherfucker.

Another promising concept that might have gone somewhere: the Planet of Peace. I \*dig\* the idea of a lip-service-to-peace-efforts planet with a smattering of representatives from the main rival galactic factions, and the wrinkle that it's pitched as a paradise but is actually a shithole, and that the ambassadors from each faction are really burn-outs being punished for sucking in their late age, is pretty clever.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Dino  
3/12/10 1:09pm

That was a cool idea, to be sure. Though naming it after the Guns 'n Roses song was strange—thanks to Rifftrax for that.

How many people enjoyed the Rifftrax to these movies? Good stuff, as I recall.

[Reply](#)

- [Dino](#)Dino  
3/12/10 1:13pm

Crap! '[T]his one'? Dammit, that was an accident. No firsties!

Back on topic: Eponymous, I have heard great things about the Rifftrax installment for V, but I've yet to get around to checking it out. Thanks for the reminder.

[Reply](#)

- [Adolph Oliver Pubes](#)Dino  
3/12/10 1:28pm

(also, screw you, Keonig!)

Too soon! The man just lost his son. Go easy on poor Chekov.

[Reply](#)

- [That Cartoon Mouse](#)Dino  
3/12/10 1:46pm

<http://www.youtube.com/watch...> Hey Koenig might not have come back for the animated series, but at least he got involved in Star Trek: Phase II:

Hmmm... Hey Zach, any interest in reviewing these?

[Reply](#)

- [mizerock](#)Dino  
3/12/10 2:32pm

I skipped (most) of the review of V [not the old-and-new mini-series], since I still haven't seen it. I'm going to rent it soon - maybe I should watch it with Rifftrax the first time? ... nah, that would feel almost disrespectful to the whole franchise.

God bless firstie-blockers. It's surprisingly difficult to avoid all words that have any association with the concept "first" (one, original, a (!), single, only, etc.) - so I believe your story.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Dino  
3/12/10 2:40pm

I got the rifftrax of Undiscovered Country, and it's definitely one of my favorites for a good movie. Mainly because Nelson and the gang can lampoon things from a trekkie perspective. Best gags were the ones where they had Spock acting decidedly un-Spock-like: "Knock this back and lose the top!"

[Reply](#)

- [Prole Hole](#)Dino  
3/12/10 3:21pm

The Rifftrax is great, even (as I think I have said in previous reviews) just for Kim Cattral being onscreen for about a minute before someone (Kevin I think) says "she just... awful." Yes she is. I have to disagree with Zack here, I would MUCH rather Saavik had come back - Kim constantly threatens to derail what's going on around here and she's the most emotional Vulcan the series has ever shown (not for the good) and just never quite convinces.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Dino  
3/12/10 5:06pm

and the weird floating pool table in the bar at Paradise City was cool, too. But I've always wondered how you would play it without splashing the water with your hand, thereby impacting the balls in the water.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Running Clam](#)Dino  
3/13/10 9:15am

Exactly—Koenig wanted to do it, the studio didn't want to pay him. The studio didn't want to pay Nichols or Takei (and maybe Doohan) either but Nimoy dug his heels in.

Notice, too, that guest voices are often done (poorly) by Doohan or Nichols. TAS was very much on the cheap.

[Reply](#)

- [humanist](#)Dino  
3/13/10 8:09pm

well, because of these comments i just checked out the rifftrax of VI... only twenty minutes in, but so far it's terrible! i'd much rather just be watching the movie itself. and i say this as a serious devotee of mst3k. maybe the whole concept only works with movies that are unambiguously bad.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 2:38pm

VI

I saw VI in the theater, and again, I was quite young. The first thing that struck me about it was how much darker it seemed from the Star Trek I had experienced growing up. I can pretty clearly remember the opening credits with its dark theme music and credits. In my mind, all these years later, that initial emotion sort of still sets it apart as far as Trek films. I mean, the first Trek I saw in the theater was IV. VI was pretty far removed from that.

The Valeris scene on the bridge is pretty intense; I remember how uncomfortable that scene made me as a kid watching it in the theater with my dad; later it was obvious to me that it was basically some form of a "rape" scene.

Also apparently Catrall took nude pictures in character on the bridge, and possibly got in some trouble for it (I don't remember, but I remember reading that years ago). Not a fan of her, but she was certainly adequate.

I remember being young and how much the "Klingon bastards, you killed my son" scene upset me, so Kirk's issues with peace in VI worked for me. I still enjoy his reactions in the conference in the beginning. Meyer got good performances out of the cast here, I thought.

Handlen, great stuff as always. I'm no fan of the animated series; I don't really like them at all, though I know many here think it's great. I look forward to that writeup, perhaps it will get me to give it another chance.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)St. God  
3/12/10 3:10pm

Until 11, TFF and TUC were the only star trek movies I had seen in the theaters - I was too young to have watched the earlier ones in the theatres and as a teenager I was "too cool" to be into star trek (don't be mistaken, I was by no means cool- I was just trying not to be too nerdy). my reactions to them couldn't have been further apart.

I remember being distinctly dissapointed with V by the point when Sulu and Checkov pretend to be in a blizzard instead of admitting that they're lost. not only is the joke lame, it's out of place. why would Uhura need their coordinates - don't their communicators do that automatically? have we ever heard someone from the ship asking for coordinates from crew members on the surface before?

TUC, on the other hand, had me completely awed. Over time, I've realized that some aspects of the plot are paper-thin (I'm talking to you, Verdian patch), but at the time I absolutely loved it. And like Zach, I was touched by the signatures at the end. That was a really classy way of letting the original cast ride off into the sunset.

[Reply](#)

- [Skipskatten](#)St. God

3/12/10 4:42pm

I always liked what they did with Kirk in VI. The idea that Captain Kirk would have some pretty serious bigotry to get over in order to cooperate with the Klingons made perfect sense, and it also gave the usually flawless Kirk a pretty significant character defect. The early scene in the conference room with Spock was a highlight for Shatner as Kirk.

"Don't believe them. Don't trust them."

"Jim. They're dying."

"Let them die."

Always gave me a little chill.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)St. God

3/12/10 4:51pm

The irony is, Shatner wanted that scene cut differently to make it look like "Let them die" was something that just slipped out and he didn't mean. It's way better as shown.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)St. God

3/12/10 4:56pm

Actually, I found that a little out of character. Kirk never seemed to have much malice toward the Klingons in TOS. I'm also not entirely moved by the "You killed my son (whom I hadn't met until just before he died and who didn't seem to like me most of the time)!" routine. I understand that Kirk, as a military man, might have strategic reservations about trusting the Klingons, but developing a new character flaw just because some rogue Klingon killed a son he never really knew? Doesn't work for me.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)St. God

3/12/10 9:54pm

Alurin - Bingo! Nicely put. Kirk always understood that the actions of a few folks don't represent the entire "race" or "species". Then again, it isn't unheard of for smart people to get more right-wing as they get older.

[Reply](#)

- [JimZipCode](#)St. God

3/12/10 10:40pm

Agree with alurin, Kirk in TOS was always "find the peaceful solution" guy. (Well, maybe except for Errand of Mercy.) The first Man of the Future: he gave the "I won't kill today" speech.

And the angst over his son never had any dramatic weight to it — the son was an annoying twit, they had no relationship, and he has like 20 mins of screen time over two movies. His death was too obvious.

Plus, Reverend Jim killed him. How seriously can you take that?

Although maybe that's realistic. Kirk might be enraged at the Klingons as a way to deflect his own failure to establish the relationship. "I did what you wanted, I stayed away" — how fucking transparent is that?? I went gallivanting around the galaxy, staying away from my responsibilities as a dad, but I only did it because \*you\* wanted it.

But even with that reading, it doesn't make Kirk's "bigotry" seem real, but rather like something he's using to hide the truth from himself.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)St. God

3/13/10 12:55pm

@Meyer: You have a point about Kirk being too old and conservative—it's spelled out in the movie. My reading is that TUC basically reads TFF out of the canon—i.e. Kirk's comment about never being so close to a Klingon ship, Uhura and Scotty no longer being together, and so forth—so I took it as having taken place much closer in time to David's death, and that Kirk had obviously never had the time to deal with his David issues. They could have gotten a little more into it, to be sure.

Admittedly, this doesn't quite account for the Starfleet giving the Enterprise crew a ship so close to having them retire, but I suppose that complaint holds true in the more conventional reading of the ST timeline as well.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Cattivo](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 1:29pm

Saavik/Valeris

I really do wish that they were able to insert the Saavik character in place for Valeris. Would have made Spock's well acted "feeling" of betrayal make more sense.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 2:27pm

I agree - I really liked Saavik (mostly the Kirstie Alley version), and I think it would've really increased the drama to have her betray Starfleet. (and it makes sense that she might have contact with the Romulans given her half-romulan heritage).

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 2:31pm

I really wish they would have mentioned Saavik's half-romulan blood on screen too...doesn't seem canon because of that.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 2:40pm

I've heard that too, and Kim Cattrall doesn't get within 10 miles of my fantasies, so it must be true.

[Reply](#)

- [Dogstyle Afternoon](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 2:48pm

That has to be a fantasy, because there's no way I would've missed out on the existence of something that awesome.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 4:40pm

If only they could have gotten the piping-hot 1982 version of Kirstie Alley to return. Instead they would have had to settle for the 1990 version. [shudders]

[Reply](#)

- [Cattivo](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 5:09pm

Yeah, Alley was not as attractive anymore; however, people didn't seem to be fans of Curtis' take on the character. I don't really have an opinion on her performance. Curtis' Saavik is better than having no Saavik at all though, in my opinion.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob K](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 7:55pm

There seem to be parallel stories: (a) some people wanted Saavik if Alley would come back, but she asked for too much money, (b) others (poss. including Gene Roddenberry) didn't want to "betray" Saavik's character by have her turn out to be a bad guy.

Could be they're both true, and that when Alley demanded \$\$\$ it tipped the balance in favor of having it be someone other than Saavik.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Cattivo

3/12/10 9:23pm

Robin Curtis did just fine as Saavik. She's also more attractive than Alley or (especially) Cattrall.

But it would have been great if they could have kept Alley in the role.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [scotteb](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 1:02pm

Three breasts

Why do writers do that? Three breasts make no sense on an organism with bilateral symmetry. Drives me crazy.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)scotteb

3/12/10 1:08pm

Well, technically three breasts can be symmetrical down the center—one and a half per side.. And human beings aren't strictly symmetrical either due to having one heart. But it was annoying nonetheless.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)scotteb

3/12/10 1:31pm

I think that people sometimes do get extra nipples down the centerline.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)scotteb

3/12/10 1:42pm

Wasn't she supposed to be of the same race (Caitian?) that was the back up Communications Officer from The Animated Series.

[Reply](#)

- [Doctor Memory](#)scotteb

3/12/10 1:44pm

Nope, extra nipples happen bilaterally as well, usually a few inches below the primary ones. There's a nerve bundle running more or less from each shoulder down to the groin which is where they connect to. (In most cases they're really small and visually indistinguishable from a mole or nevus — you've probably seen plenty of people with them and never realized it, and they may not have known either.)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wik...>

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)scotteb  
3/12/10 1:58pm

I read somewhere that mammals have roughly double the teats as their typical litter... so she's from a species that has 112 kids at a time?

[Reply](#)

- [Dogstyle Afternoon](#)scotteb  
3/12/10 3:09pm

Thank you, Fransisco. Here is your million dollars.

[Reply](#)

- [scotteb](#)scotteb  
3/12/10 4:16pm

Ha! You shot my evil twin from the mirror universe! Didn't you notice the goatee?

[Reply](#)

- [Richelieu Jr](#)scotteb  
3/15/10 9:02am

My firned has 3 nipples, but the third is off-centre and on the axis previously mentioned. Also, he is not a three-breasted cat-woman.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 3:11pm

The worst

part about V, (and there's a lot of ground to cover here) was Spock's mysterious, long lost brother. That was damn convenient. There was no reason for Sybok to be his brother. How about childhood friend? Bad enough that Kirk had a "new" son (honestly, we could see that coming, right?) but a lost brother. I call shenanagans.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 3:44pm

He'd have to be pretty damn important to not get shot immediately during that shuttle crash. I don't buy Spock holding his fire in any case, since, as he points out, Kirk is his brother.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 4:06pm

That REALLY pissed me off when I first saw that. brother or not, Spock should've shot him. He could've tried to shoot him non-lethally, but it's his obligation to shoot as a starfleet officer. That scene simply doesn't work - it's poor screenwriting, plain and simple.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)john barleycorn must diet

3/12/10 4:06pm

The sort of "instant family member" thing is a well Star Trek went to several times, right?

I could buy Spock not killing him because Spock doesn't want to kill...maybe? But I agree, make him a childhood friend or something. And I think it does quite undermine the importance of Kirk to Spock since he basically chose to not follow Kirk's pleas to shoot Sybok. Eh.

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 4:29pm

Kirk had both an instant brother and an instant son.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 4:35pm

He still could have shot Sybok in the leg or something. Hell, by future medical standards he probably could have shot him in the chest and McCoy would have been able to save him, albeit with a artificial heart.

[Reply](#)

- [Zack Handlen](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 5:53pm

Dammit, I completely forgot to mention this, but another really annoying moment in Star Trek V is when Spock mourns his brother, and Kirk says, "I lost a brother once. Then I got him back." Which is lovely, no question, except Kirk really did lose a brother at the end of the first season of Star Trek. I don't mean to a huge continuity nerd or anything, but c'mon.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 11:12pm

Good catch, Zack. I wonder if ol' George Kirk will fare better in the Alternate Star Trek universe?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 12:56pm

I'll read this first  
before posting.

[Reply](#)

- [Pinkney Seabrook](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 1:03pm

Oh. no. God have mercy why did I even try?

[Reply](#)

- [Oliver Miller](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 1:06pm

I went to grad school at Sarah Lawrence, and one of my professors taught Nicholas Meyers, writer of the only good "Star Trek" movies. (All the even ones.) I was so excited to learn this, and I asked her, excitedly... "What was he like?"

"Pretty nerdy. And very fat," she said.



So. There you go. Kind of a shocker, but he did write like three good movies and they only gave him three weeks to write "Star Trek II," so, um, respect. And he refused to work on Star Trek III, because he wanted to keep Spock dead. That's a lot of money to turn down, just based on the dramatic principle of keeping a character dead. So again, respect.

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 1:59pm

If you desire a firstie so much, go hang out at "The Hater." Amelie doesn't get a whole lot of comments sometimes.

[Reply](#)

- [El Santo](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 2:41pm

I feel your secret pain, Pinkney.

[Reply](#)

- [Loose Stool](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 3:08pm

Just go through old AV Club stuff that was written before anybody was really posting and run up the firsts. Hell, I've got dozens. I left the Rick Rubin Interview open just for you.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/12/10 3:31pm

Or try the individual cities write ups. Scoring a firstie on a Denver Post is easier than a drunk, newly divorced MILF

[Reply](#)

- [phodreaw](#)Pinkney Seabrook  
3/13/10 12:35pm

Sarah Lawrence has graduate schools?

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [OnanRulz](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:22pm

Speaking of animated...

Can we get a review of Futurama's "Where No Fan Has Gone Before"?

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)OnanRulz  
3/12/10 1:44pm

Speaking of that episode. did Fry mean to lose the trivia contest and let El-Dar(?) win.

[Reply](#)

- [Right Wingnut](#)OnanRulz  
3/12/10 1:48pm

Fry won the trivia contest. He never got his quatloos, though.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)OnanRulz

3/12/10 1:52pm

Wasn't there a contest at the end of the episode too?

[Reply](#)

- [Soylent Green](#)OnanRulz

3/12/10 2:12pm

Mellvar, with three Ls.

Takei: "I believe I know how to spell 'Mellvar.'"

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)OnanRulz

3/12/10 3:04pm

Oooh! Oooh! That would be great. Good lord, I love that episode.

[Reply](#)

- [louiebb](#)OnanRulz

3/12/10 7:42pm

To hell with reviewing that episode; Futurama should be a regular feature on the AV Club when it comes back on the air!

[Reply](#)

- [Zack\\_Handlen](#)OnanRulz

3/12/10 11:33pm

@louiebb Well, duh.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [J. Goo](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 1:35pm

Cavalcade of TV All Stars!

In six movies, the Trek franchise managed to include featured players from Fantasy Island, Taxi, Night Court, That 70's Show, and TWO different actors from Seventh Heaven.

No point to be made here - just saying it.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)J. Goo

3/12/10 1:59pm

Also Doogie Howser, M.D. and (bit of a stretch here) Twin Peaks.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)J. Goo

3/12/10 2:28pm

Maltz FTW!

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)J. Goo

3/12/10 2:42pm

Wait—who from Twin Peaks?

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)J. Goo

3/12/10 2:52pm

The Log Lady's Log was also the Ship's Log?

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)J. Goo

3/12/10 3:26pm

Miguel Ferrer (Twin Peaks' Agent Rosenfield) was on the Excelsior in ST III.

[Reply](#)

- [Bob KJ](#). Goo

3/12/10 7:58pm

Log Lady's Log = Captain's Log

Therefor Log Lady's Dead Husband = The Captain

All mysteries now solved!

"He met The Devil."

[Reply](#)

- [Bob KJ](#). Goo

3/12/10 7:59pm

Actually, the first half of that quote: "My husband was a logging man" is even better in the new light. How foolish I was not to see it before!

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [gottacook2](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 2:18pm

"Undiscovered Country" title

With respect to "I know Meyer loves Hamlet and all, but he does realize 'the undiscovered country' is death, right?":

Meyer had this title in mind for the Khan movie, and it was even announced as "Star Trek: The Undiscovered Country" during early pre-production in 1981 - I saw a little item in weekly Variety saying so at the time (back when I would buy it at a newsstand for 75 cents and it was all-newsprint). Clearly he liked the title so much that, despite it being not really apt, he still chose to use it when he got a second chance to make a Trek film.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)gottacook2

3/12/10 2:46pm

That's interesting. "The Undiscovered Country" would have been a good title for II considering the ending. On the other hand "Wrath of Khan" is a reference to the Iliad. So with that title, it's a story that begins and ends with Khan's wrath with a coda about the burial of his vanquished foe. The title "The Undiscovered Country" it would have indicated that the story was really just a set-up for Spock's death. I personally prefer the parallel to the Iliad but I could see it either way.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)gottacook2

3/12/10 2:51pm

I am sure Meyer knew what he was doing, and I believe he has spoken on this point at length, but I really don't think it is that inapt.

While Hamlet was referring to "death", he was doing it in the context of leaving what you know and are familiar with and entering something new. The "Undiscovered Country" as a metaphor carries the weight of both trepidation and adventure.

VI speaks to this throughout- Kirk's fear of irrelevance, the gang's fear of change, and (obviously) the plotters' fear of peace. The fact that both starfleet and klingon personnel were "in on it" highlights that he plotters were afraid of the unknown, more than thinking war was, for example, profitable.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)gottacook2  
3/12/10 3:01pm

Didn't Meyer want to name II "The Undiscovered Country" at some point, but he got shot down by the studio? (possible that I'm imagining that).

[Reply](#)

- [Captain Jamuary](#)gottacook2  
3/12/10 11:02pm

Mr. Meyer writes about the title changes in his exceptionally entertaining memoir, "A View from the Bridge" and speaks about the topic in his commentaries on the II and VI DVDs.

I think it can be argued he insisted on TUC for VI partly out of annoyance, (with his new clout, after having been overruled on II and stuck with the florid WoK, he wanted what he wanted) but the title works as a Klingon interpretation of what Shakespere meant: death of what we know=change. Or, as Gorkon says, "The future."

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:51pm

The problem with STV, in one sentence

"Everyone is part of the team, and, unlike V, everyone gets to maintain their dignity."

Exactly. This is why I can bring myself to despise V. It does not treat the characters with dignity. Given that there are no original ideas in the story, I'm only there because I want to see the characters. I want to see Scotty come up with a desperate fix for the engines at the last minute, not to hit his fucking head.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)alurin  
3/12/10 2:55pm

I remember sitting in the theater and laughing my ass off when Scotty fell down. Of course, I was 15.

Anyway, I agree with everything else alurin said above.

Also: anyone notice that Spock's marshmallow maker was actually larger than, say an entire freaking bag of marshmallows? And it seemed incapable of doing anything else. God, that's always bugged me.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)alurin  
3/12/10 3:26pm

Oh, how we begged my parents for a marshmallow maker after that! They actually came out with a marshmallow dispenser that looked like Spocks to tie-in with the movie, but my parents wouldn't buy it for us. In retrospect it was probably like \$30 for a cheap plastic tube that holds like 5 marshmallows but still... it was Spocks' Marshmallow synthesizer for god's sake!

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)alurin

3/12/10 3:33pm

I agree. My biggest point of contention with this movie was its shitty treatment of the characters. I mean, they're all basically fucking dumb. The ship doesn't fucking work - even the ship is treated without dignity! I mean, I remember when it blew up in III, and it - in my opinion - completely earned the emotional moment of it blowing up, it was a character in itself, and Kirk's real true love. In V, the ship was treated about like the printer in Office Space. A piece of shit that doesn't work. Uhura, Sulu & Chekov, all basically idiots. The Scotty scene was in the trailer from what I remember as a kid, and I remember thinking how silly! The only thing that scene needed was the coconut sound effect.

Also the "marshmallons" thing was pretty fucking dumb. In the novelization, whoever wrote it also apparently couldn't stand the whole Spock marshmallow error, so they wrote in some plot where McCoy rewrote the ship's memory banks to say "marshmellons" so Spock would get it wrong. Jesus god in heaven. And, I'll add, the little marshmallow device was some kind of product placement for some tie-in toy.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)alurin  
3/12/10 4:42pm

The real problem with STV is that Spock can somehow fly because he's wearing Rosignol Ski Boots. This technology is never alluded to again in any subsequent iteration of TREK. Thank God.

[Reply](#)

- [Sheldon Coopers Libido](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:18pm

Shatning

Is my new favorite word.

I guess I can wait 2 weeks to be rewarded with a write of ST TAS

Thanks Zack

Thacks

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/12/10 1:33pm

I thought it should be "Shatening".

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/12/10 3:05pm

I used the word "Shatening" on this board over a year ago.

[Reply](#)

- [alurin](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/12/10 3:41pm

That must be where I learned the spelling.

[Reply](#)

- [Meander](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido  
3/12/10 7:19pm

"Shatnering" still works for me.

[Reply](#)

- [meyer](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

3/12/10 9:14pm

"Shatening" is perfect just as it is. Mr. Barleycorn has a new and I'll bet long-term addition to the lexicon with that one.

[Reply](#)

- [Tim the Enchanter](#)Sheldon Coopers Libido

3/15/10 12:09am

Not just "shatning," but "the thick, hammy stink of Shatning."

Which makes me think of a perspiring man with boobs who talks way too loud, way too close.

Well done...I think.

[Reply](#)

Hide replies

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

3/12/10 2:25pm

V

I saw V in the theater also, and I remember liking it. I was probably 8 or 9. I also kinda knew it sucked; I remember being momentarily horrified at Kirk falling off the mountain - not because I was worried for Kirk, but because of the way Spock caught him an inch before the ground. Lame. Over the years I also got pissed off at the movie for basically taking characters I'd grown up with, and that other fans have loved for decades, and really fucking them up. The Scotty thing, Uhura's dance, Chekov and Sulu in the woods, McCoy - while admittedly kinda funny - seemingly on the verge of senile dementia...

However, one thing about V is that it is actually pretty close in story to the original series spirit and stories. As I think you basically pointed out. Take away the shitty attempts at humor, and you get an interesting story, and if you let yourself, there are moments, while heavy handed, that slightly work: Kirk's "I need my pain" moment could resonate a bit were it not ruined by other shit, and it is, as far as a Star Trek "message," well taken; The friendship between the Triumvirate is pretty heavily emphasized, and the actors still convey it emotionally, despite the writing; the "God is in each of us" message is, again, a very Star Trek message, and on its own, not terribly. It's just stuck in a shit sandwich of a movie.

The commentary for the movie is pretty funny in places, with Shatner seeming to know it's a bit of a brown steamer, but with some laments about things being fucked around, special effects problems, etc. (I don't buy that better special effects would have saved the movie, or perhaps even made it any better, but I guess it depends.) Someone should do an edit of the film to remove some of the more egregious elements; I'd bet it'd be a pretty good story at episode length.

Thank god they made a VI with the original cast. This would've been an awful way to go out.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)St. God

3/12/10 2:46pm

Yes, I enjoyed the part where Shatner said "And here's where the rock monster didn't appear."

[Reply](#)

- [Captain January](#)St. God

3/12/10 11:14pm

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think it's generally believed that Mr. Shatner suggested to Paramount home video that they release the special edition DVD of V with editorial revisions and CG effects, as was done with Robert Wise and TMP but was rejected for financial reasons. A bit of a shame — I don't think these possible changes would have made it a great or even good film but likely would have

made it better (I still maintain that if ILM had handled V's effects, it would have been a bigger hit and given it a little more critical slack — as is, the effects, at their absolute best, vary from adequate to awful and Mr. Shatner did have some genuinely ambitious ideas for his visuals at the start and was hampered by relentless budget cuts, a writer's strike, and the studio's strange diffidence about the project especially coming off the biggest hit in the movie series.)

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)St. God

3/20/13 10:14am

I remember meeting George Takei at a Trek Convention in 1989 and due to the box office performance for Star Trek V, he announced it would be the final film and thanked us fans for giving them 5 films. It was pretty final for sure...so thankful the studio let them go out on VI. Wish The Next Generation would get a better send off.

[Reply](#)

- [AntonioniHead](#)Zack Handlen

3/14/10 8:43pm

ST: The Motion Picture is the only great Star Trek movie.  
Any TMP lovers with me?

I consider TMP not just the best ST movie, but the only great one. The longer and more boring it is, the more mesmerized I get. Can watch it over and over again, and it never gets old.  
The look of the film is fantastic, V'Ger and Ilea are rightfully iconic. The FX are cool while still gleefully '70's. It's the only that reaches a true level of artistry, and takes the material more seriously than a tub of popcorn. It's also the only one that makes me feel that I can understand why people get so obsessed with these characters.

[Reply](#)

- [hercules rockefeller](#)AntonioniHead

3/14/10 11:24pm

You might want to try a little harder if you're going to troll around these boards.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)AntonioniHead

3/15/10 1:12pm

The characterization in TMP is weak weak weak, but I still think it's better than THE BLACK HOLE or most other Sci-Fi of the era. It gets a bum rap because it's a STAR TREK movie that jettisons most of the things people like about STAR TREK, but it's still a stunning and well-made epic.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)AntonioniHead

3/15/10 6:03pm

Easy, Herc! John B. thinks this is a valid opinion. (John B. will let you know when opinions are invalid)

While I think Khan is 10 times the movie TMP is, to the extent the point of TMP was to make something grander than any television show, I think it succeeded wildly. Contrast a TOS episode vs. TMP and a TNG episode vs. Generations. The primary problem with all the TNG films to me has always been that they never seemed big enough. I don't think this was a problem with any of the TOS movies, with TMP being the "biggest" (but not the best).

Yes, it is slow and plodding, but maybe "mesmerizing" is a good description. Honestly, I'd rather watch TMP twice back to back than have to slog through 2001 one more time. (I've seen both movies probably a dozen times each).

[Reply](#)

- [Generic Poster](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 4:19pm

ST V is infinitely more enjoyable

once you convince yourself that it was the real God beyond the barrier, and Spock shoots and kills him.

Also, regarding VI, I always found it funny that fat ass Scotty was the one who had to run up 10 flights of stairs to shoot that sniper.

[Reply](#)

- [Eponymous](#)Generic Poster  
3/13/10 12:42pm

Your interpretation of the film would make it more entertaining, but isn't God supposed to be omnipresent, all-powerful, etc.? I just figured immortal was part of the mix.

[Reply](#)

- [Lord Gaga](#)Generic Poster  
3/13/10 10:03pm

Immortal isn't always indestructible.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Generic Poster  
3/15/10 1:06pm

No, there's something in Revelations where it says God is vulnerable to phasers.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)Generic Poster  
3/15/10 4:35pm

I think you're thinking of the Book of Armaments.

[Reply](#)

- [MovieMike](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 3:59pm

There are four lights!

David Warner is too awesome for words. Nice that he and Mark Lenard got to play so many different parts in the Trek Verse.

[Reply](#)

- [Bad Horse](#)MovieMike  
3/12/10 4:08pm

How many lights do you see?

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)MovieMike  
3/12/10 11:59pm

It's too bad he didn't have much to do in Final Frontier (though he certainly makes full use of his limited screen time), but Gorkon really makes up for it.

"Chain of Command" is one of my favorite TNG episodes, as much for Warner's brilliant work as for Captain Jellico turning the Enterprise upside-down.

[Reply](#)

- [Samuel Klugarsh](#)MovieMike



3/13/10 10:17am

I meant to imply that I enjoyed both running plots equally, not that David Warner had dual roles in the episode(s). Apologies for any confusion, I was working Delta Shift last night.

[Reply](#)

- [Penguin](#)Zack Handlen  
3/13/10 5:48pm

C'mon, Handlen, no mention of one of the best lines of the entire franchise?  
"Only Nixon can go to China" is funny, relevant and timeless.

[Reply](#)

- [Jimmy James](#)Penguin  
3/14/10 10:25pm

The best part is how he introduces it as an old Vulcan proverb.

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Penguin  
3/15/10 1:09pm

They keep hitting that joke! Khan claims that "Revenge is a dish best served cold" is an old Klingon proverb.

[Reply](#)

- [haysoos](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:19pm

Sybok the Spock foil

As much as I usually try to avoid the endless dreck-pile of Trek novels, there was one that I was coerced into reading that had an actually interesting Vulcan character as a foil to Spock.

I believe his name was Stephen, and appeared at first somewhat like Sybok - he was a smiling, joking, charismatic Vulcan who preached the value of emotions.

But, it turned out he was faking. In truth, he was so good at the Vulcan techniques of logic he had walled his emotions so far away that he no longer had any connection to them at all. His whole persona was essentially a sham.

This served as a much more elucidating foil to Spock's character, who often claims to be emotionless and beholden solely to logic, but has been shown time and time again to actually have emotions under it all.

Watching Star Trek V, I can't help but think the whole movie would be more interesting if Sybok was actually an emotionless sham.

[Reply](#)

- [Pontifex](#)haysoos  
3/13/10 10:23pm

It was titled "Enterprise: The First Adventure," by Vonda McIntyre. Her novelization of ST IV had a reference to Stephen that was utterly incomprehensible to someone who had not read "Enterprise..."

[Reply](#)

- [FantasticBastard](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:51pm

VI is a good film, not just a good ST film

And that's one of the things I appreciate most about it...it truly can stand as a piece of (in my opinion) quality, effective cinema. That's not something that can be said for most of the Trek films (both TOS and TNG).

[Reply](#)

- [pico79](#)FantasticBastard  
3/12/10 2:46pm

Yep, that's about right.

I don't think it's an accident that their biggest on-screen successes have come from linking the movie franchise to genre films: II is an old-school revenge opera (to crib Zach's comment), VI is a murder mystery, IV is a fish-out-of-water comedy. They're at their worst when they're floundering through a hodgepodge of ideas that worked better in a television format.

[Reply](#)

- [john barleycorn must diet](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 2:39pm

Hey Zack!

"I know this ship like the back of my hand, but apparently I'm blind for some reason because I'm going to walk directly into the ceiling. Seriously, somebody should check me for cataracts, this isn't funny, it's terrifying."

In 79 episodes and 6 movies, this may be the funniest thing you have said to-date. Hilarious.

[Reply](#)

- [SpindleFiend](#)john barleycorn must diet  
3/12/10 2:48pm

Agreed! This whole write-up was a chucklefest. I plan to start using the verb "to suck on toast" immediately and often.

[Reply](#)

- [Onomatopoeia Glossolalia](#)Zack Handlen  
3/12/10 1:14pm

KAAAAAAAAAAHHNN!  
that is all

[Reply](#)

- [Chartex](#)Onomatopoeia Glossolalia  
3/12/10 4:37pm

I wish to go on... hurting you.

[Reply](#)

- [hjemsted](#)Zack Handlen  
7/04/11 7:53pm

stray observations...

I spent the last few days watching my Blue Ray set of the ST original cast films...

\* Star Trek V must have had an incredibly small budget: The script feels like a first draft that went straight to shooting. The special effects are the worst of all the films. The theme music is lifted directly from the ST: TNG television series.

\* Star Trek VI: Michael Dorn's cameo is billed as "Klingon Defense Attorney" but he is referred to (by the Klingon judge) as "Colonel Worf". If the writers were trying to do what I think they were... shouldn't this character have been referred to as "Colonel Moag"?

\* In general: High definition is not kind to aging actors.

[Reply](#)

- [Brian Wolters](#)Zack Handlen

3/19/13 5:24pm

I have to totally agree here. Star Trek V is an Enigma. It is not a good movie but it is watchable in spite of itself. The humor is very bad yet why do I look forward to it and even chuckle? And like you said, I appreciate the sincerity of what they were trying to do with this film. It does contain the best laugh in any Star Trek Film: "I could use a shower" (Spock sniffs every so slightly, pauses and says) "Yes." I like watching it more the Nemesis.

[Reply](#)

- [St. God](#)Zack Handlen

3/16/10 12:32pm

Star Trek V: In Thy Image

Okay, so I found this. Probably no one is still reading here, but here it is anyway:

<http://qwantz.livejournal.c...>

This is a link for both a torrent and an .avi of a re-edit of Star Trek V, re-titled "In Thy Image." I watched it; it basically makes an episode out of TFF, and takes out most of the more egregious elements complained about here. And, you know what, it's pretty good.

[Reply](#)